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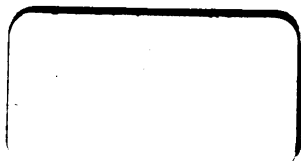
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The Dominant Passion

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The
Dominant Passion /
A Novel

By
Marguerite Bryant /
Author of "Christopher Hibbault, Roadmaker,"
"The Adjustment," etc.

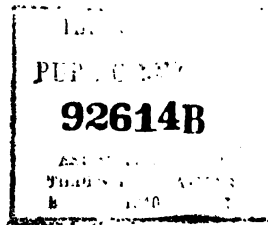


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PART I.

The Dominant Passion

CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK.

VIEWED as an artist, Andrea Bradon might be said to occupy as exalted a position as may be achieved by mortal man struggling to encage the soul of things in the material mediums of paint and canvas. Viewed as a man, his position was hardly so elevated, was indeed at the other extreme of things, for that high aim, that honourable conscientious truth in view and detail, and the pure ascetism which amounted to religion in his work, were conspicuous by their absence in his life. It was one of the unsolved riddles of humanity how it came about that Andrea with his colossal selfishness, his non-moral code, and his entire irresponsibility, preserved to himself friends. Perhaps it was through the sheer magic of his art; or, maybe, his own complete unconcern towards certain ugly facts in his career infected others with like disregard for them. Friends he certainly had.

First among them might be set his cousin Anthony Bradon. Anthony lived the greater part of his time abroad and only saw him at long intervals, and Lady Lewisham—their almost sole living relative—was unkind enough to say that this probably accounted for the fact that Anthony kept up any relations with his cousin at all; ignoring her own quite marked friendship with the illustrious artist. If any one ventured to remark on the fact to Anthony himself, he would just

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smile in his tolerant way and say that Andrea was all right when you understood him.

They had indeed passed their earliest boyhood together, though that in itself is poor reason for a lasting friendship. Anthony, who was nearly a year younger than his cousin, though head of the house, was unmarried. He had imagined himself in love several times before he was twenty-five, but since then he had had no room in his life for such fancies, or perhaps he had taken the view that love was too serious a matter to mix with another serious matter, such as that which controlled his life. For Anthony Bradon was a bacteriologist of no mean repute, in spite of his comparative youth in the scientific world. Science may be more than a serious matter in a man's life, she may be an exacting mistress! At all events this sufficiently accounted for the fact that he had so long escaped the wiles of wordly-wise mammas, who would have thankfully handed over their responsibilities to one so eminently fitted to deal with them. Science, however, saw no reason for relinquishing her claims because Anthony was materially independent of her, possessed a name at least as old as the estate that supported it, and was the most desirable man to whom to marry one's daughter in London, or out of it. He continued, therefore, to exert his brains in the hope of pronouncing sentence of banishment on some of the ills of mankind, let Wallingford—his well-beloved home—and for the last six years, at least, had lived chiefly in Northern Italy where the particular ill he was studying thrived best.

He came over to England every few months as necessity or desire urged him and, if on such visits he made rather strenuous efforts to avoid acquaintances, he was careful to look up his friends, and he never by any chance forgot to see Andrea.

On the morning of the twenty-second of May, 19 .

Anthony came out of the quiet hotel where he habitually stayed, with a happy sense of an unusually empty engagement book, conflicting with the knowledge he had kept it so free to have time to argue out a certain matter with his cousin which lay very near his heart. The gods that watch the affairs of men so attentively, sent him no premonition of the Great Adventure that was to be set in train that day.

There was some detail with regard to the Max Astons' dinner that night that troubled Anthony. He was to meet Sir Vallory Massendon, the astronomer, there, but it was not in connection with him, he was sure. It was something to do with Mrs. Aston—and rivers, boats, crossings? He recalled it at last. He had promised Mrs. Aston to read a certain book before he met her again, and it was called *The Ferry Boat*. He had promised—and he was to dine with her to-night and had forgotten all about it. He was deplorably ignorant of modern fiction and could remember nothing as to the author's name, nor why he was to read it; but having promised, he must do it somehow. He made his way to the nearest bookshop, all unaware it was another step towards The Adventure of his life. He knew the shop well but the counter with which he was most familiar was of little use to him to-day. He looked round in rather a helpless way, and at last selected a brisk, faultlessly attired young man, and enquired of him for a book entitled "The Ferry Boat."

"Who by, sir?" demanded the intelligent assistant as if he merely had not caught the author's name.

Mr. Bradon did not know.

"Or publisher?"

He did not know that either.

"Is it a novel of this season?"

The would-be purchaser feebly thought it was.

The obliging young man said he would go and see.

The output of books was so large it was impossible to keep all the titles in one's head.

"Perhaps you will like to look at this while I am gone. It is this season's, and much spoken of."

He pushed a slim green volume forward, the first to hand, and left Mr. Bradon and the book thus introduced.

The customer did not take the hint, he barely saw the title. He looked round at the stack of books with something of despair. Certainly, it was absurd to think any sane creature could bear all those chaotic names in mind. Then his eyes fell with relief on the familiar "Introduction to Bacterial Research." It was a new and popular edition and he opened it, saw a misprint and absently corrected it in pencil.

Suddenly aware of what he had done, he gazed with consternation at his handiwork.

"Now I shall have to buy it," he murmured disconsolately, "and it's such a beastly edition. I wonder if Mrs. Aston would like it as well as 'The Ferry Boat'?"

He could think of nothing to do with that novel when he had read it, but give it to the lady who seemed to admire it so much.

The young man returned triumphant with the latter volume in his hand, and displayed it as if, between them, they had done a clever thing.

"It was a last season's book," he explained. "I believe it had quite a vogue at the time. We fortunately had a copy left. Won't you let me put up this one too?"

He laid his hand on the green book.

Mr. Bradon rejected the idea hastily. Two novels in a day were beyond him, but he instructed him to put up "The Introduction to Bacterial Research."

He did not look again at the little green book.

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Andrea Bradon's house was in Abbey Road and was a square, ugly villa, standing back from the road, in a walled garden where various trees and shrubs led a free untrammelled life, and lived or died, shed their leaves or donned them, without troubling any one. Such parts of the house as pertained specially to Andrea's own use were comfortable and well appointed. The basement was given over to the caretakers, and there was a constant procession of these, who all had one likeness in common, in that whatever they might not be from the domestic point of view, they were inevitably picturesque and paintable. The upper floor was given over to Lawrence, who, three years ago, had made a sudden appearance in Andrea's ménage as a shy, silent boy of twelve. Andrea did not trouble to explain him, but he spoke of him to those who might presumably be aware of his existence as "my son."

Andrea was not noted for punctuality unless it suited his own convenience, and his caller displayed no surprise at hearing he was out, although the hour was of Andrea's own selection. He said he would wait in the studio, and the servant—a new importation to Anthony—looked troubled. He thought of consulting Master Lawrence, then recollected Master Lawrence was out also. There was comfort in the fact that the visitor evidently knew his way, and went straight upstairs to the studio which was built out level with the first floor. It was a room not without attractions, nevertheless. Once the servant had gone, Anthony went out straight into a little alcove, or enclosed balcony, which opened out of it, and contained a lounge chair, a small table, and a picture, the latter hanging on the narrow strip of wall opposite the chair and invisible to any one but the occupier of it. Anthony looked anxiously at the wall and gave a little sigh of satisfaction when he saw the picture

still there. One was never sure with Andrea that some sudden freak might not result in the banishment of what might lately have been his chiefest treasure.

This painting was of a woman standing, bending slightly forward, with her arms held out towards the beholder. Her shadowy drapery seemed rather an emanation of her spiritual nature than actual substance. The graciousness of her face was so far removed from mere prettiness that one might trace there a likeness to the soul of any woman living. The austere simplicity of the drawing, the faultless flow of the line, and the purity of colouring, placed it far from the range of modern exhibition pictures. It might have hung between a Botticelli and a Tintoretto. Not a score of people knew of its existence!

Anthony Bradon sat on for some time on the edge of the lounge chair, contemplating it with quiet satisfaction. There was something aloof and remote in it that corresponded exactly to that secret temple within his heart that still lacked an altar fire. So far as he might be said to hold any definite idea of "woman," he found it here and found it satisfactory. But the waiting gods grew impatient and maybe jogged his elbow, thereby knocking a book off the table—for a book was still the chosen medium for advancing *The Adventure*. Anthony picked up the book and was putting it back when a certain familiarity in the green binding struck him and he glanced at the title: "The Garden of Desires."

It was the same book the young man had been so anxious to include in his parcel that morning.

Let it be noted that the young man's anxiety to sell the book was not without its place in the scheme of things, for had not Anthony's attention been directed towards it already, it is doubtful if he would now have opened it, for it was Andrea's, and the cousins' tastes in literature were as far asunder as

their conceptions of life. But since the book had been thrust on his notice and Andrea did not come, he did open it.

It was by a Miss Honor Passfield, at least, he visualised her as "Miss" without overwhelming evidence. She had apparently written other books well received by the press if not by the public, though, as far as her present reader's knowledge went, she might have been the most popular writer of the day. He felt vaguely that Fate was unkind in not letting it be "The Ferry Boat," which he was bound to read, having in a weak moment promised to do so.

He turned over the leaves absently at first, and then more slowly, and turned them back again.

It is, of course, possible to say that Andrea's habit of unpunctuality was the real *Deus ex machina*, but it is almost impossible to obliterate the unlikelihood of Anthony reading a book of Andrea's by chance, or ever seeking an introduction to some unknown friend of his cousin's so entirely out of his own line of life. No, once the book had been thrust on his notice, it can only be maintained that it was Honor, and Honor's voice alone, that called to him across great spaces.

He was still reading when Andrea entered with his light, noiseless step and stood leaning against the door, watching him for a few seconds before Anthony was aware of his presence.

Andrea's pointed face laid claim to good looks, though it aroused curiosity rather than admiration, and a strong desire to "fix" that expression lying behind the eternal amusement of his eyes—amusement which he never seemed to share with the world. He was slim and agile, and had a certain redundant vitality that was decidedly attractive.

His eyes sparkled now with inward amusement as he took in his cousin's occupation.

He gave no formal greeting, but a little pleasant nod.

"There was a ball at Chelsea last night," he said lightly, "we got home some time after five this morning, and half a dozen young idiots wagered they would meet at breakfast at Ferrenti's at nine o'clock, and made me stakeholder for my sins. I was asleep at eight o'clock, hence these clothes." He indicated with an apologetic wave of the hand, his rather negligé attire.

"Did they all shave?" asked Anthony, looking him over slowly with a smile.

Andrea's face dropped.

"No, I was out of it; I felt the incomplete artist entirely."

He rubbed his smooth chin ruefully.

The visitor's eyes strayed to the picture on the wall and back. Andrea noted it, as he noted every detail. He strolled over, leant across the back of the chair, and looked at his picture.

"Good bit of work, that," he drawled carelessly; "just look at the folds of the drapery on the left shoulder. By Jove, I'd like to do that again! Just a shade too much depth of colour, don't you think—and a trifle too clever?"

Anthony got up without replying. He hated to hear Andrea criticise his own work. Moreover, the criticism was false in that case, the picture was not "clever" at all in the way he meant it, and no one knew better than Andrea. Anthony's eyes fell on the book he still held and those other sharp eyes noted that too.

"I'll change, if you don't mind waiting," he said casually. "I'm sure it would annoy you more to have to contemplate me like this than wait awhile, especially as you are so well employed."

"Who is this Miss Honor Passfield?" demanded Anthony slowly.

But Andrea only laughed in his careless way and went off whistling. He reappeared in a miraculously short time decently clad in blue serge.

Anthony put down the book and followed the other back into the studio, after glancing at the name of the publishers of the little green volume.

Andrea saw that too, and in his turn made no comment.

"Well, have you thought it over?" questioned Anthony anxiously. "Are you going to let me arrange about Lawrence?"

Andrea had taken up his stand before a large unfinished canvas, and was regarding it contemplatively.

"So good of you," he murmured; "only I really can't spare him just now."

"But it would be to his enormous advantage," pleaded the other. "Hausmann will make him work seriously. It's a chance in a thousand."

"But what about me? Of course, Hausmann will make him work. He's the sort of genius who practices eight hours a day or something terrific like that, isn't he? What use would Lawrence be to me if he adopted such habits? I can't paint nothing but musicians, you know; the public stand a good deal, but they wouldn't stand that, even from me!"

"Andrea, be serious for Heaven's sake! It's a question of the boy's whole future."

"And mine. You don't consider," he added plaintively, "that at present Lawrence not only saves me incalculable sums a year in models, but is material to hand whenever I want it. I give you my word, Anthony," he went on, with genuine enthusiasm, "that the boy can't make a movement I don't long to take down; he is grace personified, and his face is a mere field for the emotions—and he has them strongly." He ended with a curious little smile, which made Anthony wince.

"Are you telling me that you stand in the way of his career merely in order to retain him as a model?"

Anthony's voice was incredulous. His cousin turned to him in pitying surprise.

"My dear old fellow, what else should I mean? Lawrence's career as a musician is just problematic, whereas there isn't anything problematic about this picture—unless it's the subject."

Anthony came round to his cousin's side. His hands were shaking a little, for he was very angry, but long experience had taught him that to be angry with Andrea was not only to waste energy, but to lay oneself open to the most unscrupulous inspection of that clever, shameless mind.

"It's not considered etiquette to look at an unfinished work without invitation," Andrea murmured gently, "but since it's only you——"

The picture was of the Marriage Feast of Cana, treated in an amazingly unconventional way.

"It's to go to a new gallery Cleveny the big wine-dealer is setting up, and this is to be a sort of protest against the remarks of his teetotal friends, I take it. Unless," he added thoughtfully, "he is going to utilize it as an advertisement—if I thought that, I should charge him more."

"I thought you never did work on direct commission?" said Anthony, resisting all attempts to be dragged into the protest for which Andrea was fishing.

"It depends how big the commission is."

"It's nothing of the kind, you old humbug."

"It's not humbug," retorted Andrea, indignantly; "a man thinks he must live, no doubt it's arguable that he is wrong; but there it is, and therefore I paint two or three pictures a year on commission. The rest of my blissful time I cover canvases with paint to my own exceeding joy, and when I have no room to stack

more against my walls, I give them away if I can find friends or enemies to victimise."

It was clearly no use expecting to make Andrea listen to common sense by direct means. Anthony sighed and looked round the room. Certainly there were a good number of pictures, or at any rate, frames, piled up against the walls. A sudden recollection struck him, and he came to grip with an idea that caused him a blush and some embarrassment, but was too good to be rejected.

"You seem to be getting full up now. Treat me as a friend—or an enemy—and sell me that—that picture."

He did not specify which, but his embarrassment was quite apparent. There seemed no need to specify, for Andrea looked round with teasing nonchalance, but with no pretence of not understanding."

"The St. Anthony? I am not sure it's here; I fancy I sold it to a millionaire lately."

There was a mocking glint in his eyes that Anthony did not see.

"You promised me, Andrea," he began, with such obvious distress that his cousin relented a little.

"Did I? And you accepted my word? Well, perhaps it's somewhere about still; I may have handed it over to the kitchen. There are several there."

He rummaged amongst a pile of pictures as he spoke, and Anthony followed his movements with anxiety.

"Ah, here it is after all!" he exclaimed, as if it were an accident on which they might pride their luck, and he dragged out a big picture.

"Help out with it, old man."

"I don't want to see it," expostulated Anthony, hurriedly; "but I'll give you your price for it, whatever it is."

"That's a rash proposal. Have you been gambling on the Stock Exchange?"

By this time the picture was released and turned to face them, and despite himself Anthony had to look at it. It was a picture of The Temptation of St. Anthony in the Wilderness. The young and extremely attractive saint, clad in a very rudimentary garment, was kneeling before a bare rock, while five charming figures illustrative of the senses danced before his averted eyes. It was not a very good specimen of Andrea's art. The whole thing bordered on the conventional in treatment, but his cousin's objection to it was not based on the grounds of Art, but lay in the fact that St. Anthony was a speaking likeness of himself bereft of a few years, and one could hardly imagine a more trying position for a modest young man than for the said picture to hang on the walls of an exhibition frequented by his acquaintances and friends. Such, however, had been Anthony's unhappy position five years ago. It spoke well for his unresentful nature that he bore no lasting grudge against the perpetrator of this outrage, and of his artistic appreciation that he had not then and there demanded its instant destruction. Perhaps if he had Andrea would not have withdrawn it so soon from public view, but he had persistently declined to sell it to Anthony on the ground that he feared he would destroy it to gratify his own ridiculous scruples.

"Let me have it," pleaded Anthony.

"To bequeathe to the nation?"

"Yes, after my death, if you wish it."

"My price is that you leave me in quiet possession of my problematic musician."

It was a temptation at least as alluring as any that floated before the redoubtable St. Anthony himself, and for a moment the modern Anthony wavered.

"I can't do that," he said, with a sigh. "I think Lawrence ought not to stay here, wasting his life as your model. I feel bound to do what I can for him."

"But he is not your son, but mine, to the best of my belief."

Anthony took no notice.

"A son is not a possession, Andrea."

"What then?"

"A responsibility," returned the other, flushing a little hotly.

"Perhaps he doesn't want to go." Andrea ignored the last remark with a tolerant smile.

"He is not old enough to judge."

"Wait till he is."

"It would be too late then."

"For shame!" cried the artist, with his mocking laugh. "You would take the poor child away from his natural protector and cast him amongst strangers, before he can appreciate past, present, or future."

"You know that is not a fair statement of it."

"State it your own way."

Andrea had taken up a palette, and was dabbing paint on to the big canvas with deceptive ease. He was enjoying himself immensely; there were few things that gave him greater pleasure than taking a rise out of Anthony, although he was as fond of his cousin as he was capable of being fond of any one.

"Plainty stated," Anthony said quietly. "You don't take the responsibilities of fatherhood seriously enough and this is not a good atmosphere for Lawrence to grow up in."

"Dear me! I thought it far better air than Kensington, or Paris."

"You know what I mean," persisted Anthony. "If you are only going to allow him to idle away his time here, you had better have left him with his mother."

"It would have been more simple," replied the impenetrable Andrea. "But, you see, she moved on and there might not have been accommodation."

His cousin looked up quickly.

"She is dead," Andrea added, lighting a pipe. "He might have gone to the workhouse certainly, or whatever the German equivalent for it is. I thought of it. They turn out quite useful citizens, don't they? But when I saw him, I saw also an opportunity to practise that economy my friends have always recommended to me. I fear I do not see my way to lay aside a virtue so recently acquired yet."

Anthony rose.

"I am sorry," he said, quietly. "When you are tired of it—or him, let me know."

"And you don't want the picture?"

"Not at your price."

"Poor victim of a conscience! You inspire me to generosity! I'll give it to you, if you swear not to destroy it."

"I'll not destroy it, and I'm tremendously obliged."

They discussed the method of sending it to its destination, Andrea professing bitter disappointment that it was not destined to decorate the walls of the Villa Guardini.

"The idea of wasting so much good work and such moral excellence on a shut up store-room," he grumbled. But Anthony was firm and would not even hear of letting it hang up, even in the remotest passage at Wallingford.

"It must go into the one locked up room there. I shall see it every time I go down to Wallingford to look over things," he said rather grimly. "That's enough for it."

That matter disposed of, and realising that there was nothing to be gained by pleading further for the unfortunate Lawrence at this precise moment, Anthony prepared to take leave, and then recollected he had still a question to ask.

"Is Miss Passfield a well-known writer?" he inquired.

Andrea had taken up his palette again, and assumed absorption in his work.

"Hardly well-known to the general public, but to an admiring and select circle of friends—yes. I prophesy great things of Honor."

He said it carelessly, using the Christian name with an ease that might, or might not, be assumed. Anthony wondered which.

"You know her then?"

"I have that pleasure. A jolly little girl she is, too! Do you think so much of her last book after skimming a few pages, that you want an introduction?"

"I read so few novels," said Anthony, apologetically, "that I am no judge, but it seemed to me original and sincere. And you know her well?"

"Does that spoil it? Don't you want to meet her any longer?" inquired Andrea, sadly. He laid down his palette and regarded his cousin with great and open interest. "You have not finished the book, you know," he added.

"I shall do so. It was offered me this morning in a shop, by the way."

"I will tell her. She will be charmed to hear it really offered for sale."

"What is she like?"

Andrea shook his head.

"No, Anthony, it's no good, I shall not introduce you. Why should you have your delusions shattered? Besides, I am not sure it is fair—to Honor, you being 'you.'"

Which indefensible remark Anthony felt it safer to ignore, and he departed bidding his cousin good-bye with the not unusual feeling of faint surprise that they had not quarrelled.

Andrea set to work in earnest when he had gone, and forgot for the moment what to him had been but

a trivial, if amusing, conversation. It recurred to him, however, when he stopped to relight his pipe.

"It might be worth seeing after all," he thought. "I wonder what they would make of each other—Honor and Anthony?"

CHAPTER II.

THE PASSFIELD FAMILY.

As an address, Number 10, St. Jude's Road, Kilburn, carried an air of ecclesiastical respectability that the facts of the case hardly warranted. Not but what it was an eminently respectable road but the majority of its inhabitants laid no stress, it is to be feared, on its ecclesiastical merits, and remained, many of them, fairly oblivious of the active life going on in the ugly little church round the corner. The dwellers of Number 10, for example, had never as much as crossed its threshold.

Number 10 was a superior house, standing alone in a garden of its own. Lilacs and pink may peeped over the wall, and in spring generously shared their wealth of lovely youth with their neighbours. There was ivy on the house, sooty ivy, it is true, but it did its best to testify that all was not bricks and mortar in this street-ridden world. From the gate one could not see that the semi-circle of grass before the house was rank and weed-grown, or that the surrounding shrubs needed pruning, or that the door itself lacked paint. The house belonged to one, Aubrey Golightly Passfield, who was a widower with a long family and short means. They lived at Number 10, not because they were justified in living in detached style, but because it would be useless to attempt to let the house without doing it up, and where was the money to come from for repairs, with Honor setting her face so sternly against the tempting speculation of calling in a builder, and trusting to luck to get the money to pay him out of a problematic tenant? Honor was not

the eldest of the family, but if she set her mind against a thing, the secret, if not the expressed, opinion of the house would generally be with her. She may have owed her authority to the fact that while every member of the Passfield family meant to do something at some time or other, Honor was, so far, the only one who had actually brought this off, and was respected accordingly. This may not have been the sole reason, perhaps her own personality had something to say to the matter, but her authority was indisputable.

On Sunday afternoons, when Mr. Passfield lay on the lawn on a deck chair whose days of security were passed, he took a mournful pleasure in planning the alterations and decorations in which he would indulge, if permitted. That, in itself, was in some sort a compensation for not actually indulging in them.

It was not solely a question of finance that made Honor set her face against a move. She had an affection for the house in which they had all been born, and where her mother's people had lived before her. She liked too, to think it was theirs, and it troubled her sometimes to remember that when Peter, the youngest boy, reached the mature age of twenty-five, the possibilities of a sale became practicable. However, Peter was only sixteen at present, so for nine more years, thanks to the sentiment of their grandmother, they might "let, but not sell" Number 10. Before then, many things might happen. Wilfred, the eldest son, might give up art and make a fortune in business, or she might achieve "editions" (this was the likelier event of the two) and then the house could be done up. She sighed over the bad repairs. She knew it was an untidy scambly house, lacking all modern conveniences and comforts, and far too large for their means and staff, but she felt fairly sure that whatever house the Passfield family inhabited, it would be inconvenient, scambly, and untidy. The

latter item might be their own fault, the state of scramble due to circumstances, but the first item was just a matter of luck. They seemed to have no magnet to draw useful, convenient things their way.

Alice, the eldest girl, who had no share in what her father called "The Sense of the Beautiful," kept house for her more gifted relations and had no opinion on the subject of moving one way or another.

"Settle it as you like," she said. "There's no hot cupboard here, and no bathroom and the skirting-board in the dining room will fall in if it is touched, but it's nothing to me. I am not responsible if the house tumbles down."

"Dear Alice," Honor would answer, coaxingly. "It would be just as nasty for you as for us, if the house did fall down, and I do wish you had a nice hot cupboard." Then Honor would go away and worry in secret as to whether she ought not to accept Mr. Fellows' offer to write "Short Chats for the Evening Hour."

"I can't, I can't," she told herself with passionate fervour, again and again. "It's not as if we were starving. We've enough to live upon—in our way. And I should get to hate the thing that's dearest to me in all the world!" So they continued to do without the hot cupboard and new flooring and Honor continued to write the charming fantastical stories that publishers eyed askance, and finally published without much hope, handing Honor a little cheque for fifty or sixty pounds for her year's work. There is this to be said in their favour, the publishers took the books because they considered they had merit, not because they were convinced the general public would discern as much.

Honor was now commencing her fourth book.

There was an apple tree in the Passfields' garden amongst the laburnums. It did not bear apples but it

did occasionally bear blossoms. On the morning of the twenty-second of May, Honor sat under this tree with a writing pad on her knee; she was sitting on the ground and round her lay various little oases of paper covered with small, clear writing weighed down against the breeze with pebbles. It did not appear a very comfortable or very business-like way of writing but Honor contrived to write quite excellent English, and to mature very charming ideas in many unbusiness-like attitudes. She was not a quick worker, but that was rather because she never resented interruption, than because the flow of her ideas lacked continuity.

This morning when she had just decided, after twenty minutes' hard work, that yesterday's chapter must go into the waste basket, Alice came out to her. Alice wore a print overall and carried a duster. She asked after Sara's whereabouts (Sara was the third sister), but still lingered even when she had learned that erratic young person's probable movements.

"Life isn't a bit like your books, you know," said Alice, abruptly, looking a little resentfully at the papers on the grass.

"Then it ought to be. Where is it most unlike?"

"Marriage and love-making and proposals, and all that."

Honor leaned back and gazed up in the laburnums, considering the matter. Alice straightened the papers with her foot.

"There's always something beautiful about those things," declared Honor, the idealist, at last.

"Mr. Timmins has asked me to marry him."

Honor sat upright again and gasped. Even her optimism could not for the moment see anything beautiful in the idea of Mr. Timmins being united to Alice.

"He shows an appreciation of good things that I

should not have given him credit for," she remarked, thoughtfully. Honor had a habit of making pretty speeches of her family that were quite sincere and without *arrière pensée*. Her family pretended to think it silly, but secretly liked it.

"But what about me?"

It was a little shock to Honor to find there was really a question of Alice at all; still she concealed her surprise.

"Do you like him?" she asked, slowly.

"It's like this," said Alice, seating herself on the grass and beginning to fold the duster into a neat square. "We know a lot of men, of course, but the kind that comes here—your friends and Father's and Wilfred's—are not the sort I care for, and they haven't any money, and it would be all just the same as now, living from hand to mouth. Sometimes I am tired of it."

Honor frowned just a little with her effort to catch this point of view. Her mind could not readily accept the idea of regarding Mr. Timmins as a possible refuge from monotony.

"He doesn't understand anything about art and all that, but he is kind and I rather like him, at least, I don't mind him."

This was evidently a concession.

"He is kind," agreed Honor, heartily; "and of course art doesn't matter at all, only I expect he would want you to do more than like him, wouldn't he?"

"Lots of people marry for that—even in books," Alice retorted a little petulantly.

"Heaps of people, but I don't let my heroines do it."

"I'm not a heroine," protested Alice.

"Oh yes, you are Mr. Timmins' heroine. I was thinking of him."

"Well, think of me," replied her sister, a shade impatiently.

Alice out of the window. She had seen the visitor as soon as he entered the gate.

"Thank you, I'm coming." He rose, hung on his step a little and then remarked: "I asked him yesterday again about it. It appears the hair is wanted still for the beastly picture;" then abruptly, "Honor, I just hate him at times."

"It's such a pity," she sighed. "If only he understood a little more about music and you a little more about painting it would be all right."

"Would it?" His voice was too grim and set for his age and he added resentfully. "Sometimes I think it's all pretence, his saying he doesn't understand."

"You ought to insist on having some life of your own."

"It's easy to say."

He gave his unhappy little laugh again and went slowly indoors.

Presently there came the sounds of a piano through the open windows. First a half-hearted attempt at scales, then silence, then a wonderful bit of pure sound, a haunting, throbbing air like nothing else. Honor felt that Lawrence, with his still imperfect technique, showed signs of just that original genius that raised his father's work to its unique position.

Honor sighed and resumed her writing. She was fond of Lawrence and sorry for him, but she liked his father too, and she was still young enough to feel a little impatient with the mind that suffers hardships with complaints instead of with active struggles.

For half an hour Honor's pencil swam swiftly over the white paper and Lawrence's music poured forth from the windows, changing presently with reluctance that made itself felt, into scales and exercises and monotonous repetition and then to Honor under the apple tree came Sara. Like Lawrence she came slowly and with discontented mien and flung herself down

by Honor's side. She wore a loose rather sack-like dress of an undeniably fine colour, though whether one was justified in exhibiting the same to the streets of Kilburn was a matter of personal taste and nerve.

"I've seen that coat I designed last week. They have made it. It's just lovely," sighed Sara, designer of costumes to Freely and Co.

"Well, is that something to regret?" laughed her sister.

"Yes, when one can't buy it. Oh, Honor, it is hard to be always planning beautiful things for other people to wear and never to have them."

"You do want a new coat, don't you?"

Sara wrinkled her rather retroussé nose.

"Not at four guineas, worse luck. It could not be copied for less; they are asking eight."

Honor made a rapid calculation on a corner of her paper.

"Wouldn't you get discount on material? It's not so very impossible, perhaps! I owe you a birthday present, that might help. Let's go and see this afternoon."

Sara sprang up. If any one imagined her rather floppy attire indicated limpness of mind they were greatly mistaken in the young lady.

"What a dear you are, Honor! And what a brute I am to be interrupting you," she kissed her tempestuously and disappeared into the house.

Honor wrote on steadily, she was evidently enjoying her own work now for her eyes sparkled and the corners of her mouth dinted with amusement. Her pen seemed to swim over the paper and to leave the long tangled-looking line of black in its wake with no effort whatever. If she stopped, it was to rest her eyes on her vision, the pretty figures of her dainty fancy disporting themselves on the grass before her—

on the gritty grass of a London garden, yet to Honor for the moment rich in her gift of the gods, no mere sooty lawn but a garden set free of enclosing walls, a garden of alleys and flower beds where romance and all things beautiful and eternally true because of their beauty, walked hand in hand to be gathered by her, and chained down to the exacting limits of paper and ink.

"If I could only really catch them," she thought ruefully, after one such pause, "instead of merely photographing them."

She shook back a little strand of hair with a sigh and the vision faded.

The sounds from the drawing room ceased to be mere precise mechanical exercises and became melodious again. A girl and boy came in through the gate and waved hands to Honor. Their heads were bent together over a sketch book as they went up the drive; they both carried sketch books and pencils and india-rubbers, and either would have been seriously offended if he or she had been taken for anything in the world but an art student; their age—they were twins—was sixteen years and three months. They did not come and interrupt Honor because they had a respect for "art," even the inferior one of writing.

Alice must get those twins some new shoes," thought Honor, with a worried frown. "Peter is walking as badly as Prudence."

She looked out across the walled-in garden again and no vision obscured its narrow limits this time. A curious cloud settled down on her brain. It seemed to her she had sat there writing, not two hours but twenty long monotonous years to an accompaniment of scales and exercises, of children in downtrodden boots, of wails from a young life demanding colour and yet more colour, to needs undetermined, unfulfilled, and over it all the golden haze of her stories cast

a golden net and caught the sordid details and made them into pictures, spun wider desires, truer interests out of them. She saw future years stretching away and she was still in the same garden, still watching the actualities of life, but with no golden haze between it and her. A strange trembling came to her so that her heart stood still and her courage lay prone. An almost uncontrollable instinct seized her to cry out loud that this narrow garden, these small daily petty happenings were not life, but that life was that which was caught in her beautiful net. *This* was the delusion and sham unbearable, except when viewed through that golden glamour. She wanted to believe this, to be sure that her own dream world would last forever, overlapping that other crude existence. Did not Andrea live in such a haze of gold? And Andrea was at least as real as Prudence's boots, or Lawrence's music, or Mr. Timmins!

Honor sprang up and looked round the garden. Nothing had altered there.

"What is the matter with me?" she asked herself, with sharp fear. "I have never felt like it before."

She avoided looking at the ground at her scattered papers and knew she avoided it. It was that that frightened her more than anything.

She stood still and forced herself to think hard, and the result was she decided it was all Mr. Timmins' fault. She had no place for him in the foreground of her life and he seemed bent on thrusting himself there and upsetting her perspective. Yet against the uncomfortable thought came to her that there must be something wrong with her outlook, if the golden meshes would not enclose Mr. Timmins' portly form, since Mr. Timmins was most distinctly a part of life.

"I think," said Honor to herself, "that what I want is *change* and a new experience. Because Mr. Timmins has proposed to Alice it does not mean that love

is not beautiful in sense as well as form *sometimes*, and that lovers *are* quite often like my people."

She looked down at the papers thoughtfully.

"If I can imagine them," said Honor Passfield, "they must exist. I can't have evolved the idea out of my own head."

But still misgivings crowded over her. She thought of her hero and she thought of the men she knew actually, her father, Wilfred, Lawrence, Andrea, a score of others and Mr. Timmins! They none of them in the least resembled the Man in her book.

She went down on her knees and re-gathered her papers with compressed lips.

"I shall not go on with it till I have met a man who might be like—that—who makes him possible. If he does not exist it can all go into the fire and I'll write about Mr. Timmins."

It was very much like a challenge to Fate.

CHAPTER III.

A TEA-PARTY.

HONOR was sitting on the back of the big sofa in Andrea's studio. Her hair was just a little ruffled and clearly her temper was a little ruffled too!

"He might just as well be a lay figure at once," she said indignantly.

"My dear child, that is just what he might not be! I would not require him if he were, for I have an admirable one of my own. Besides, musicians always have long hair, haven't they? It's half the thing. They couldn't be musicians without it any more than I could be an artist without a velvet coat."

"You haven't got one. Oh, you are too exasperating!"

Andrea laughed. He had quietly fixed a blank sheet of paper on a corner of the canvas on which he was supposed to be working and was drawing on it with rapid fingers, talking all the while, or rather inciting his sitter to talk; not that she needed much encouragement for she was full of her subject and asked nothing better than to discuss it.

"It makes him remarkable. People turn round and look at him in the street. Oh, I know he's not conceited in the least—he hates his looks and I don't wonder. Yes——" she persisted, waving aside his depreciating murmur, "I don't wonder, when they mean this everlasting sitting to you. But to hate one's looks is every bit as bad as to like them too much, it means not forgetting them and when people turn round and stare—Andrea, would you like it yourself?"

She flung out her hand towards him with a quick

decided little gesture that was characteristic of her.

"You have no soul for Art, Honor," sighed Andrea sadly; "I am sure even Prudence would appreciate the position better."

Honor ignored this unworthy comment.

"You are altogether too selfish to live," she remonstrated, indignantly.

Andrea's fingers moved more rapidly still.

"Again let me refer you to Prudence," he said solemnly. "She assured me the other day that only the selfish could hope to succeed in art—real art," he chuckled quietly.

"Why do you encourage her?" protested Honor, with such genuine distress that even Andrea was rather taken aback.

"She hasn't found it out, you know; she's only been told it. Don't you believe it?"

"I suppose so—in a way," she owned grudgingly. "No, I don't. It's not selfishness, it's the sacrificing oneself to one's job, not sacrificing other people to it."

It sounds nicer that way," he murmured, and tossed her the paper on which he had been drawing.

It was just one of his rapid portraits that he was continually making and she was well used, or should have been, to involuntary sittings yet they always made her angry. She hated it as she hated the idea of weaving any actually known story of real flesh and blood into her novels. It seemed to her an outrage on the rights of the individual. However, as there were so few points to place to Andrea's credit, let it be here recorded that he never made a sketch of Honor which he did not show to her.

She gave no consideration to the excellence of this one, but flung it down.

"One's never safe," she exclaimed, "and I came to sit for the Melisande thing, or whatever you are going to call it, not for an exaggerated thing like that.

You are wasting my time and yours."

"It's not half so exaggerated as the picture," Andrea protested, with assumed indignation. "It's just like you and the picture is much more beautiful. It's you who have no sense of proportion. Fancy wasting all that expression on so trivial a matter as Lawrence's hair. However, to make up," he went on, hastily regaining his precious sketch, "I'll invite you to tea to-day, and introduce you to an unknown admirer of yours."

Honor looked doubtful.

"I can't be running in and out of here all day long," she retorted; "you seem to think we live next door."

"You can stay if you like," he asserted with that provoking density he loved to assume; "only you ought to put on your best frock—the Holland one, and an orange ribbon, not a red one. Red doesn't go with my curtains."

"The Holland dress wants ironing," she protested limply.

"Iron it then, or get Alice to, because you look well in it. I assure you it's an important occasion. Here's a young man—we'll call him young, he's a little younger than me, a mere babe—so smitten with admiration for your work that he wishes to make your acquaintance. It's one of those mistakes which the public are forever making about their idols, but perhaps it's good for them to have their idols shattered, anyhow, that's not your concern."

"If you would only be so obliging as to talk sense one minute!"

"When I do talk sense or tell the truth no one recognises the fact,—not even you—it's discouraging."

He was painting hard now to make up for lost time, indeed, the invitation had been given chiefly for the purpose of holding her there.

"Don't you want to hear the name of your admirer?"

It's no less a person than my inestimable cousin Anthony Bradon."

"What! the St. Anthony?" Honor forsook her pose and her eyes wandered to the piles of pictures against the wall.

"Yes, the very same—courting temptation this time! But I shouldn't advise you to allude to the picture, unless you happened to be bored with him and wish him gone."

"If only I were certain you were not making it all up!"

"On my word as a painter," he assured her solemnly, "will you come to tea and meet my cousin who's much taken with your books?"

What girl could have refused, independently of the fact she had secretly cherished an admiration for the St. Anthony of the picture?

"You can bring Prudence, if you like," Andrea added, as an afterthought. It should have been Sara by rights, but he did not much care for her.

"I don't expect she'd come," Honor replied. Conventional politeness was a matter in which the Passfield family did not deal and it partly accounted for Andrea's friendship for them.

Honor claimed release and while she put on her hat offered suggestions.

"Don't forget to tell Lawrence to get some cakes and things," she said anxiously. "And would you like me to come early enough to dust up a bit, if you won't let Patsy do it?"

Patsy was the female part of the staff for a fleeting moment.

Then Honor added inconsequently:

"I thought your cousin lived in Italy."

"So he does mostly. But the microbes needed replenishing or exhibiting or something. His special

pet is one that bites you and gives you paralysis. He is trying to discover a way to extract its teeth."

"It sounds dangerous," she answered, with her head in the air. She was not going to encourage him to talk nonsense by betraying her interest.

On the way home she reflected ruefully that she had not accomplished the thing she had meant to achieve as a reward for sitting to him; namely, obtaining permission for Lawrence to get his hair cut. She wondered with vexation how her purpose had been defeated. A few days previously Anthony Bradon had left the house with a precisely similar feeling!

"Andrea always escapes one," she thought to herself. "There's no holding him. He seems to escape all consequences too, nothing happens to him that ought to happen! I wonder if he's really fond of his cousin or not, or if it is just that he is amused. It would be quite easy to hate Andrea if one did not like him so much!"

Andrea most certainly did like his cousin and would have disliked any change in their relationship almost as much as he would have disliked any rupture in his friendship with Honor. At the same time he never went the least bit out of his way to avoid such a catastrophe. Indeed, he never went out of his way for any living creature at all, which was an attitude not at all incompatible with his enormous interest in them. In that spacious secret mind of his, he had made for himself a mental picture gallery where he hung for continual inspection the portraits of some few people whom he regarded as perfect examples of their type. Anthony had a very prominent place there. He looked upon him as he might have done on a very perfect example of Raeburn's art. Honor also was there—but she had a special gallery to herself. These two were his chiefest treasures and he was never tired of looking at them, trying them as it were, in different

lights and in different positions. All that actually happened to them served as new background to enhance their charms for him and it was not the least valuable asset in Anthony's portrait that Andrea retained the right to "hang him" there, in spite of a hundred opportunities of cleavage between them. And not the least pleasure he obtained from Honor, was the knowledge of her dim dismay at his attitude, or professed attitude, towards his own work, Honor being keenly alive to the spiritual significance of it, while he at least pretended a mere interest in its technique.

So far Andrea had been careful not to hang his two "Masterpieces" near each other. He considered they might mutually destroy each other's value, yet Anthony's remark that he wanted to meet the author of "The Garden of Desires" suggested a subtle temptation. And a temptation to Andrea's mind was a thing to which one succumbed as soon as ever time was ripe or it interefered with work. Still he played with the idea for a day or two; held up Honor, so to speak, in his mind's eye while he talked with Anthony and *vice versa*, with the result he felt obliged to correct his own impressions by actual experiment. His quick mind took in the fascinating excitement of it as he issued the invitation to Honor. How would they look side by side, these two treasures of his and what would be their effect upon each other? He had little doubt of the effect Anthony would have on Honor, but he was more doubtful as to the effect Honor would have on his cousin. Anthony's ideas of women were, to Andrea's mind, charmingly picturesque and bearing no relation to facts at all, unless they might be found in a modified degree in Honor. But would Anthony recognise them there? Honor was abrupt, outspoken, unconventional, without in the least knowing it. It would never occur to her that she needed a chaperone when she lent her head to Andrea for a

morning's work, or overhauled Lawrence's clothes, or made tea for them in the afternoon. And it may be safely said that if she had thought so, she would not have been allowed to do either of these things, not because Andrea would have concurred with her views, but he would have considered it a bad lighting for his picture.

After Honor deserted him that morning, he began to grow really interested in the idea of his tea-party, and then it suddenly occurred to him that so far, the tea-party consisted of Honor and himself and that Anthony was ignorant of the entertainment in store for him. This was a rather serious oversight, for Anthony's time in town was drawing to a close and he was very likely to be engaged already. Andrea, who had been in no real working mood for the past week, flung down his brush and shouted to Lawrence that he wanted him. But Lawrence had retreated to his own den at the top of the house and was deeply immersed in an old volume of counterpoint he had surreptitiously bought with some change for which Andrea had forgotten to make inquiries.

Andrea went out to the foot of the stairs and shouted again. His voice, even when he shouted, was sweet and clear and echoed through the house with almost the cadence of a song. It was irresistible and compelling, a magnetic barrier against ill-will. Lawrence's mood, resistful of the summons, succumbed to it as a sand heap to the sea. He ran down a flight of stairs and leaned over the banisters.

"I am going to have a tea-party," Andrea explained hurriedly. "See there's a decent tea, will you—and flowers—only white ones, mind? And mind you are ready, Anthony wants to see you."

"Mr. Brandon?" Unuttered questions hovered in the air.

"He thinks he does; Honor's coming too."

Lawrence had long abandoned attempting to understand any movements of his father. To the uninitiated they were chaotic and disconnected, to the initiated they were the logical sequence of an egotism that gave itself wholly to the idea of the moment, that idea being at this present to effect a meeting between Honor and Anthony. Since Anthony might possibly have other plans for the afternoon, it was necessary to find a sufficiently tempting bribe to outride previous arrangements. Lawrence was to be the bribe!

Not that he had the least intention of allowing Anthony to rob him of this valuable asset, but he was prepared to compromise. He was sure Anthony's conscience, which might resist the temptation of a mere tea-party if other engagements were made, would not allow him to forego any chance of benefiting Lawrence. It was Andrea's way to display a total disregard for proportions and to make a perfectly unscrupulous use of anyone's weakness to get his own way—so long as it did not give him undue trouble.

Honor fulfilled her part of the programme with docility. Alice ironed her linen dress and she found a ribbon of the desired colour, and arrived at Abbey Road in time to overlook Lawrence's preparations for tea and to despatch an unwilling and rather nervous boy upstairs to reduce his fair and disorderly looks to such order as might be.

Her fingers ached to shear them but the memory of some two years ago when that audacious step had actually been taken and had resulted in his and Andrea's disappearance from her horizon for three months, deterred her. Lawrence himself, except when goaded to anger by his father, was by now dully acquiescent where his personal appearance was concerned. He recognized that his place in the universe, so far as it concerned his father, was that of a useful model and that his hair was a valuable asset. Nothing

but a new place or a new universe could give him the right to denude himself of his asset.

Honor tidied up in an effectual manner and put out of sight sundry sketches of herself which littered the place, so she thought. She looked for the St. Anthony picture, but could not discover it, and then fell to thinking of its original. For the first time it struck her it was rather an outrage on an unwilling victim, far worse than a surreptitious sketch. She wondered how much he had minded. She knew more of Andrea's cousin than he knew of her. She knew, for instance, that he was a man whose word was accepted with respect by learned societies, because she had read as much in a Review article explaining Mr. Bradon's position in a recent controversy. Andrea had given her the article to read. He must have been talking nonsense when he said that Mr. Bradon liked her books. Was it probable a man like that would read novels like hers? She felt suddenly abashed and ashamed. Her stories were no more than pretty fancies, reflections of things that seemed to her beautiful and full of pretty laughter. No, it was not at all likely really that he would care for them, even if he had read them. Andrea must have some other reason for his tea-party. That was the worst of Andrea. One could never be sure of him, or of what he was at. She felt a little sore, immensely young and rather frightened. "I hope he won't think I don't know that what I write is all pretence," she thought anxiously; "that it's only part of true things."

She was vaguely confused in mind, convicted of disloyalty towards her own dearest creations and yet impatient of their limitations over which she had never before troubled herself.

"I couldn't write any other way," she found herself pleading to some unknown judge, "I haven't seen

enough and besides one does not put all one's self on paper."

Then she blushed quite hotly at her own weakness.

"Idiot," she told herself, "as if any one asked you to put yourself on paper! It's the truth about certain things you have to put down all the beautiful true things other people know are true, but have not got time or knack to set down for themselves. That's what you have tried to do. You haven't put them down just because they were pretty fancies. You knew they were true, so why need you be ashamed?"

Still she continued to feel apologetic and to look anxiously at the clock. Just then a bird swept in at the open window—a dingy impertinent *gamin* of a sparrow, but it betrayed quite as much alarm as if it had been a country skylark, flinging itself against the windows and missing with maddening insistence its way to freedom. Honor sprang up on to the window-seat but still was not high enough to reach it, so she pushed an armchair against the wall and climbed on the back of it. It was not very safe and after all, she had to climb down again and search for an extra long maul stick, to which she tied her handkerchief. By means of this she brushed the terrified sparrow into a corner of the window and held him there while she stretched up on tip-toe to reach him.

It was at this precise moment that Andrea entered and ushered in his cousin. Honor, rather heated and disordered, made a hasty and undignified descent from the chair, tossed a feathered ball out of the window, and turned to greet her host half defiant, half laughing and secretly a little vexed because of Andrea's cousin.

It was certainly not a well managed meeting from the point of view of those watching gods, but really

so long as these two did meet, it was of no great moment whether it was a dramatic affair or not.

"Are you cleaning the window, Honor?" inquired Andrea blandly. "Surely it was not so bad as all that. And why toss your sponge out?"

"It was a little beast," she protested, indignantly. "I wasn't cleaning the window. You ought to be grateful to me—and, I was quite tidy a minute ago."

She smoothed down her dress with evident concern.

"And Anthony has such a partiality for immaculate neatness," said Andrea, wickedly. "Still you must face it, Honor; he's your unknown admirer and my very good cousin, Mr. Bradon, better known to you as 'Anthony.' Anthony, this is Miss Passfield. You are already acquainted with her work and her qualities are written on her face."

Now no one could be more tactful than Andrea when it pleased him, but either the incident of the sparrow or some impish mood of mischief seized on him and he plunged straight into what Honor called his "*enfant terrible*" humor, and knowing his proclivities that way, she shivered with apprehension. It did not strike her that his cousin was probably quite as well acquainted with his powers in this direction as she was. Nor could she have guessed a similar shiver of nervousness passed through Anthony from the same cause.

She thought she had never seen such kind eyes as looked into hers as they shook hands.

"Andrea never was a good hand at introductions, Miss Passfield," he said. "I think he always used to play truant when a lesson in manners came up, but he need not have invented excuses to get me here this afternoon, instead of telling me the truth."

"I did not invent," protested Andrea, with injured innocence. "I can't help it if Honor likes to run in and out to tea, it's only because Lawrence gets some

special cakes she fancies. And we can talk business; she won't interrupt, or if she does, it will be two to one against me, so you'll score."

"Do train your memory better, Andrea," she said quickly, over her shoulder. "You asked me to tea this morning specially to meet your cousin."

She was determined he should not have it his own way and whatever his real purpose was, she felt that actual facts were tolerably sure to run counter to it.

Andrea saw it was war and accepted the position with a laugh.

"Have it as you like, Honor. Any how Anthony left a Duchess languishing in order to come to my tea-party."

"Do you believe that, Miss Passfield?"

"You can't deny it," interposed the irrepressible Andrea. "Remember the wire you sent."

Anthony seemed still to wait her answer.

"I don't quite believe it," she said steadily. "I am ready to believe in the duchess and the tea-party, as separate items, however."

Clearly if Andrea was going to be tiresome she was not to go unprotected. She turned to push back the heavy armchair she had displaced and was forestalled by the visitor, who made some remark she did not catch. Nothing could have been more commonplace and conventional, yet Honor was unaccountably aware that something had happened and that there were more things to reckon with in life than she had imagined. Her first fear of Mr. Bradon came back, and she was again conscious of her youth, of her lack of real knowledge, her lack of many things.

Andrea had left them and was hunting in a desultory way for a cigarette while clearing a confused pile of sketches and paints off a table, which Honor had not ventured to touch. She sat down by the open window and leaned out. The trees in the garden below

and in the neighbouring domain mingled their branches contendedly, the sparrows were chirruping and quarrelling after their manner. Honor found nothing to say, and it was a predicament she had never experienced before. Certainly she had never before been flung against so completely unknown a quality.

Years afterwards, she told Anthony that the phrase "wishing the earth would open and swallow her up" had meaning for her for the first time.

Just at first Anthony did not help her out. He was occupied in storing up an impression of a thin, slight girl with dusky hair twisted up in one great coil round her head. A girl with grey eyes and a finely modelled face that seemed alive with courage and some inward vigour glowing through her whole personality. Though neither face nor colouring exactly resembled the painting, Anthony knew instinctively that so far as it had a living original here stood the type from which Andrea had painted his "Ideal Woman" hanging in the alcove. To a mind with Anthony's training, to read is to remember, and certain little sentences and phrases in her book ran through his thoughts as he looked at her. At last he told her quite simply that he had read "The Garden of Desires," and liked it and wanted to read her other books.

"I don't read many modern books, I haven't much leisure," he admitted candidly; "so I am not a judge, but it gave me pleasure. I liked your thoughts in it and I liked your way of saying them."

Her eyes shone and there was a little throb of thankfulness in her heart. It seemed to her quite wonderful that any one outside her own immediate circle of friends should even read what she had written, she was never able to clearly believe in her outside audience at the time.

"They are quite simple things," she said shyly, "that

every one knows. I am always afraid when I think of it all, that other people will not know, I know that."

She stopped, feeling a little involved, and knitted her straight brows.

He told her of a point on which he did not agree with her and she explained with eager seriousness her reasons, or her opinion, and listened intently when he rather diffidently suggested to her the spot where her logic failed.

She sat with her head on her hand, thinking hard and then agreed.

"Isn't it dreadful," she questioned with real pain in her eyes, "to think it's printed there and can't be altered though it's wrong?"

"In the next edition?" he suggested in all good faith.

Honor laughed.

"Why, it won't sell out one edition! I should feel really famous if ever I reached two."

At this moment Lawrence burst into the room, unconscious that his father had returned.

"I say, Honor, there's a button off—" he began, and then seeing who was there, blushed scarlet, and turned hastily to the door.

"Lawrence!" called Andrea's cold, sweet voice from the far end of the room, "go and speak to Mr. Bradon."

Lawrence obeyed with evident reluctance. His excessive self consciousness was up in arms against the momentary surprise. He had seen Mr. Bradon at least three times before, but the fact that he was here, that Honor was here, that his father was here, was sufficient to make him aware of every one of those physical perfections of his which Andrea found so useful and admired so callously, and with that all his unhappy antagonism to the whole world became dominant.

He shook hands with Mr. Bradon sulkily and ignored Honor, and made another attempt to retreat.

"Don't be shy, Lawrence," Andrea called out lightly, "Anthony is your very good friend, if you only knew it."

Lawrence looked from one to the other miserably. Honor sprang to the rescue.

"We shall have to move the tea table after all," she declared, "the sun's right on that window now. Come and help me, Lawrence."

Anthony looked at them as they re-adjusted matters to Honor's liking. They stood where the rather cruel light of the big skylight fell on them pitilessly, but he wondered if in all London one might find such a couple to stand together; Lawrence with his wonderful beauty of body, and Honor radiant with that especial quality of hers that banished all things ugly and undesirable as unreal.

"I am glad you appreciate it," said Andrea's voice over his shoulders. "You see why I stick to London?"

Anthony felt a sudden chill—a sharp distrust of Andrea that past experience might well justify, and then suddenly the fear died out, for he looked at Honor again. There were some sorts of thoughts and fears which had no real existence in her presence.

The picture of Honor and Lawrence, however, was not the picture that Andrea desired to contemplate himself, so he ordered Lawrence to the tea table, and seated Honor near his cousin in such a way that the light accentuated her colouring, and she could see Anthony to advantage. Then he set out to exploit Honor. It was an easy task for even a less adroit hand than Andrea's. Her almost miraculous lack of self-consciousness and her engaging interest in any and all subjects that came under her notice, made her an easy prey. Andrea apparently did nothing at all, just a word here and there, and a casual remark to prompt her wit to sallies. There was no doubt at all Andrea was an excellent

showman, though only one of the three people interested knew it. Lawrence attended to his duties with a stoicism born of long usage, but his attention was not so much absorbed that he did not divine what his father was doing. His love for Honor sprang up in indignant defence of her. Why should his father show her off like this, make her express those thoughts Lawrence never believed his father even understood—thoughts that were just—Honor? Did he not know himself how hateful it was to be exhibited, to have one's points trotted out and to be made to pose and twist and turn to his father's whistling? The shame and indignity of it had bitten deep into his soul. His revolt surged through him now; it made it all the worse that Honor was unconscious of what was happening. He forgot even himself in his wrath, and Andrea looking at him was aware of those darkened eyes and of the shaking hands that passed him his tea, as if they would gladly have handed him a deadlier draught.

Andrea wondered just for the moment if it were jealousy, then smiled at the fancy, and leant back in his chair, contemplating all three with genuine enjoyment.

"My dear Honor," he put in a comment on some remark of hers' "what you call kindness is merely politeness, in other words, a mere weak surrender to public opinion. Courtesy does not exist now. It died with Victoria, or Queen Anne, I forget which."

Honor turned and flashed out defence of her own theories.

"You are quite wrong," she assured him seriously. "Listen to this. I was coming home in an omnibus the other night and there was an old gentleman opposite me—a tremendously fine-looking old man, beautifully dressed, and a miserable old woman got in with a bundle. She wasn't even clean and she smelt of gin, but there were no seats and she had to stand, and my

old gentleman got up, as if it were a matter of course, and offered her his seat."

"Did she take it?" inquired Andrea with interest.

"Yes, she said something about having walked miles, but I longed with all my heart to get up and give him my seat. Courtesy is the loveliest thing in the world."

"Why didn't you give him your seat?"

Honor coloured and looked at Anthony.

"Isn't it dreadful of him to pretend he doesn't understand things?" she asked.

"I don't know," persisted Andrea, provokingly; these pretty little refinements don't come my way. Why didn't you give the old gentleman your seat, a strong young thing like you?" He affected indignation and Honor again sought his cousin's eyes for sympathy.

"It was a matter of course to him—he would have hated—" she faltered.

"Why do you trouble to explain?" put in Anthony quietly. "Andrea is only teasing you, Miss Passfield, still I hardly see why so simple a thing should have struck you so deeply. What else could he have done?"

"It's so lovely to find what one believes is true," she explained hastily.

"But that is just what it does not prove," persisted Andrea, "you believe, child that you are, that people are kind and chivalrous and courteous, and all sorts of pretty things like that, yet you so rarely come across these qualities that you are grateful even for a solitary example from an exceptional being, which proves nothing but that a few souls here and there hold your creed—I expect there were half a dozen men in the omnibus who did not budge. Your blush betrays you. Can you imagine me—or Anthony here, giving up his seat to any old woman, even if she were clean?" he added mischievously.

Honor glanced from one to the other, much embarrassed, and got red.

"That's a most unjustifiable question," said Anthony, rather hotly, but Andrea held up his hand.

"Now don't show your bad manners, Anthony, by interrupting, if you can help it. I am anxious to see how far Honor's imagination will carry her."

"Just at present," retorted Honor quickly, "it will not carry me the length of imagining you doing one nice, kind, decent act on the spur of the moment."

"I always thought your imagination over-rated," he said mournfully; "but you have only answered half my question."

"Honor!" broke in Lawrence's passionate voice, "don't answer him, don't let him do it—don't you see he is only playing with you—getting a rise? It's hateful!"

Andrea turned his chair to face his son with intense interest.

"Splendid!" he murmured. "Another knight for you, Honor. Go on, Lawrence, what were you going to say?"

Lawrence stood facing them, his hands clenched, his lips trembling visibly. The passion in his face still flared, but in his eyes there was a pitiful look of helplessness that was almost childish.

Honor got up and went across to him.

"Don't mind him, Lawrence," she said soothingly; "it doesn't hurt me." Then she turned on her host.

"If I had guessed you were going to be in such a horrid mood I wouldn't have come. I am very much obliged to Lawrence for warning me as to your question; you don't deserve an answer, but if it will quiet you, then I *can* imagine Mr. Bradon doing anything that is kind and considerate—*although he's* your cousin."

She flushed scarlet, but she held her head high and

would not allow even to herself she was frightened. If it were not the right sort of thing to say, Andrea should not have dared her!

"There, there!" said the culprit reproachfully, "that's quite as bad as giving up your seat to the old gentleman. Look how you have embarrassed Anthony."

"It's you who should be embarrassed," retorted Honor. "I will not come to tea with you again."

She made Lawrence give her more tea and then retreated with him to the window seat.

During this little scene Anthony had sat back in his chair and watched with an interest that a superficial observer might have thought bore a family likeness to his cousin's alert attention, but which was as far removed from Andrea's inhuman selfish amusement as could well be. When Andrea turned to him with that queer glint in his eyes and his hardly veiled expression of real enjoyment, he met with no encouragement.

If Anthony did not interfere, it was because he felt that Andrea's companions probably understood their antagonist best, without outside help, and he would only add fuel to the fire, also he was not going to add to Andrea's entertainment by censuring him. The only thing he could do was to change the subject.

"If we are going to settle anything about Lawrence's music lessons, we had better do so now," he said, before Andrea had time to retort further.

Andrea looked after the young couple away in the window seat.

"But Lawrence is occupied," he said lazily; "and Honor is offended and won't give her advice and—".

"It was just an excuse then?"

"It mightn't have been at the time, but I forget. Any how it's justified."

"I wonder if anything you do is justified," began Anthony quickly and stopped himself with difficulty.

"You should be so grateful! Isn't it a new experi-

ence to go to a tea-party where you can frankly quarrel if you feel so inclined?"

He paused a moment, hung on his words rather, and Anthony realised that there was something novel in the barefaced way that these three apparently antagonistic people had acted and spoken, according to their first instincts, but even as he thought it, Andrea's drawling voice went on.

"Honor's adorable when she's angry. The tilt of her head—did you notice?"

"It's surprising that she ever crosses your doorstep," broke from Anthony involuntarily.

"My dear chap, you don't suppose she was serious? Why, it's just like striking a match—pretty coloured fire—it's out directly."

"It may burn you some day—."

"Like Harriet and the matches? Look!"

He indicated the two apart, with a faint gesture of his fingers.

The quivering caged look of resentment had gone out of Lawrence's face and he was laughing at some nonsense of Honor's. She too had brushed aside her momentary wrath, and presently called to Andrea for appreciation of the baby joke that had amused them.

A sense of relief swept over Anthony. He could have given no reason for the pleasure it was to him to realise Honor Passfield was a child, but the feeling of tenderness to her youth, of desire to protect her from unrecognised danger, seemed at once legitimate and good. He felt Andrea's mocking eyes on him and met them steadily.

"It has always been like this," said Anthony, with an odd little smile. "You are the spoilt boy now, as you always were, Andrea. You always get friends that you do not know how to appreciate and you ride rough-shod over them, and they forgive you before your offence is cold."

"I was just thinking how sad it was you could never appreciate Honor as well as I do," the unmoved Andrea returned.

At that moment Honor called to him and demanded the return of some sketches belonging to Prudence, which, it appeared Andrea had purloined, pretending he wanted them for design. They argued the matter at some length, Honor threatening to prosecute him for infringing copyright if he used them. The short quarrel was forgotten.

Anthony decided he would go. It was Honor who stopped him.

"I thought you came to see about Lawrence's music," she demanded boldly, with a little crease of anxiety over her eyes. Andrea groaned.

"I want Andrea to let him at least have a piano here, so that he can practise and take lessons at the Guildhall or somewhere get-at-able, if he won't let him go abroad."

Honor looked from one to the other.

"But, of course, he will do that," she said rather impatiently.

Anthony looked at his cousin.

"Will he?"

"There would be room for a piano upstairs and you would not hear it there, not so much as you hear the one in the opposite house," Honor urged.

"But he will be at it all day."

Andrea's objections were really very weak.

"At all events he will be on the spot," she persisted.

"It's very good of me to want it, because he won't come to us so much."

"It's not my fault if your piano's worn out."

"He may have it, mayn't he?"

Honor still directed all her attention to Andrea. She looked at Anthony from time to time to mark progress, but Lawrence, the object of the discussion,

was ignored. He had drawn nearer at first and then retreated again to the window where he stood leaning out, apparently indifferent to the struggle going on on his behalf.

"It's settled," urged Honor again. "You are going to give it to him, Mr. Bradon?"

"Yes, let's have it all cut and dried," Andrea put in with a sigh, "still you are incorrigible, Honor,—I should never have had the temerity to ask Anthony for such a present!"

"No, I should think not," she retorted, "considering if you cared to take the trouble to sell a picture, you could get it yourself, but that's no use, you know," she added, turning to the visitor with a little gesture of her hands, suggestive of the futility of dealing with Andrea, "even if he *said* he would do it, he would only put it off and forget. If Lawrence is to have a piano of his own, it must just *come*, so that it would be more trouble to send it back than to keep it."

"He shall have it, Miss Passfield."

It might have been a direct gift to herself, pleasure so kindled in her face.

"Lawrence, do you hear Mr. Bradon's going to give you a piano?"

Lawrence, thus summoned, came near, slowly, his big grey eyes glanced from one to another half suspiciously.

"Oh!" groaned Andrea, "this is a conspiracy! I'm paying heavily for my afternoon."

"You are not. It's Mr. Bradon who is paying."

Lawrence looked straight at his benefactor.

"Some day I shall pay you back," he said slowly, "I think it sounds silly to say 'just thank you'."

"You haven't got it yet," put in Andrea. "Anthony's pets will catch fever or something, and he'll forget. I shall live in hope."

"They both sound horrid," Honor put in, with anx-

ious solicitude for his feelings; "and Andrea is horrid, but Lawrence will thank you some day. I'll do it for him now."

"That is quite enough," laughed Anthony; "it's you he should thank. I see you know how to manage even Andrea."

CHAPTER IV.

A CALL.

FOR three or four days after Andrea's tea-party, Anthony remained vaguely dissatisfied and angry with himself. It seemed ridiculous after all his intentions, to have accomplished so little on Lawrence's behalf. He was more seriously inclined to quarrel with Andrea over his treatment of the boy than over any of his many former delinquencies. He almost desired a quarrel, though the futility of it was only too apparent. Andrea would just laugh in his pleasant amused way, and continue to offend.

It would be Anthony who would feel any breach between them, because if he permitted himself to say all the things that at this moment he could find it in his heart to say, he could not with any self-respect on his side, remain friends with his cousin.

To Anthony this meant something more than a mere breaking off of personal intercourse. He would have felt constrained to banish Andrea's pictures with Andrea's personality, and with them a joy that was part of his existence. It would have meant renouncing the faith that hitherto ruled him with regard to his cousin, viz., that Andrea was a man who must be judged by his works and not by his life, that the pictures were the real Andrea, and the rest—only a pity!

Did he really wish to give rein to his anger? He thought ruefully how little it mattered to any one but himself, and that brought him back to a sense of humour, and to realising how often the same thing had happened before.

He thought of Andrea's father—his own father's

younger brother,—and his early tragic death, of Andrea's boyhood under the care of Aunt Camilla of the pretty frocks and charming friends, and all the fascinating *entourage* of her little salon in Paris, where she preferred to live rather than at her native Brescia. He remembered how the precocious and irresistible Andrea was the centre of this gay life as a child, petted and fêted, and yet later on, in spite of all temptations to squander his gift, sticking valiantly to his invincible ambitions, brushing aside with colossal unconcern such projects of his mother, as stood in his way. He thought, too, of the few years that his, Anthony's, father had succeeded in rescuing Andrea from all this, and transplanting him to the healthier atmosphere of Wallingford, and of school-days and holidays together; of Andrea's passage from boyhood to manhood, steadfast in nothing but the one thing and for that sacrificing everything and every one who stood between him and it, with an unconcern that was as genuine as it was inhuman.

He remembered, too, how Andrea's only response to remonstrances had ever been a careless shrug of the shoulder, and a bold assertion that he justified himself—or would do so!

In the opinion of the world he had made that justification good. There was not an artist in Europe who could touch him in his own particular line, and though that might not mean much in the world's history at the present, yet men already for the sake of criticism judged his work beside that of the mighty men of old, and his work was everything the man was not! For there, knit together with marvellous strength, was all the glory of life linked with triumphant truth and behold, it was very good! Good, not only in the language of the art critics, but good in the language of the philosopher, the saint, the dreamer, the enthusiast.

Truth became a substance, not a shadow, when Andrea Bradon painted her!

Was it reasonable to judge a man like this by the standard of other men? Anthony thought not, or rather he judged—if one could call his modest appraising of possible merits by so stern a word—at all events he preferred to consider, Andrea as a painter rather than a man, and for the painter he entertained a grateful homage, that was not lightly to be cancelled.

But his mind was not easy when he thought of Lawrence.

Nor when he thought of Honor Passfield!

He had thought of her a great deal in the short time. He had also read the rest of her modest literary output. He was not clear yet as to how she came to write books like these, they seemed to him to bear small relationship to her surroundings from the little he had gathered. But they each bore that particular quality which had attracted him in the first place: a certain joyous, sane faith in the ultimate beauty of all things that were fundamentally true. He felt a strong desire to feel assured she would carry that quality into wider outlooks and freer thought, that her development might be in accordance with the promise he perceived in her.

He found himself considering the subject rather than that of Lawrence's doubtful future. What ever Miss Passfield's ordinary life might be, her friendship with Andrea was evidently a main factor in it, and there was no doubt that under Andrea, *the painter*, her special gifts would meet with nothing but encouragement; but what about Andrea *the man*? If he—Anthony—was covertly anxious about Lawrence, it was only reasonable he should be still more anxious about a girl—a mere child after all.

It occurred to Anthony at this point that if he should happen to quarrel with Andrea, it would cut him off from the chance of again meeting the mere child, and

it was most distinctly clear to him that he wanted to meet her again. After all, why should it depend on Andrea? It was true he had only known her a week, counting his knowledge from the time of his first perusal of her book; but Andrea was a broken reed on which to lean. His time in England was short, and he had not so many friends in the world, or such abundance of leisure for making them that he felt constrained to stand on ceremony.

Anthony Bradon, who hated calling above all other social inventions, decided he would pay a call. It needed Andrea's intimate knowledge of his cousin to appreciate the significant fact.

Then he realised he did not know her address.

But he knew the address of her publishers and there were such things as telephones.

Exactly one hour later, Honor, intent on revising the first chapters of her new book in her favourite spot under the apple tree, heard the gate open and saw a visitor approaching. He did not at all resemble the usual visitors at Number 10, and Honor sprang up in wild alarm to seek haven, when the visitor saw her and unceremoniously came across the grass towards her.

"I hope you won't mind my calling, Miss Passfield," said Anthony; "but I so much wanted to meet you again." The simplicity and completeness of the statement, were, in just proportion to the truth. He was oblivious of the fact that the house before him might contain other people, and took the chair she offered quite happily, after helping her to remove the papers and ink which had occupied it.

"Of course, I am interrupting you," he went on ruefully, when she had assured him she did not mind his calling in the least. "I seem to have a knack of turning up when people are extra busy. I paid a call on my aunt the other day and found her conducting a Sunday School Teachers' Tea. I felt horribly guilty and

they made me stay—for my sins. What do you think Sunday School teachers are like when they are not teaching and aren't having tea on the strength of it?"

"I have never met any," Honor confessed frankly; "at least, not to my knowledge. But I was not doing anything so important as that. I was only revising and I hate it. It's adorable to be interrupted."

"Still, you will have to do it another time."

"Oh yes, I stuck to it to-day," she added laughing, "chiefly because my own heroine would have done so. She's that kind, and it would be so ignominious to be more weak-kneed than one's own creatures."

"That does not always hold good, does it?" he asked anxiously. "All authors don't take on the virtues of their subjects?"

She rested her chin on her hand and sat smiling out across the garden.

"I like that world. They are subjects—unruly ones though, sometimes."

"Surely, the most ruly subjects possible."

"Oh, no. One can't always make them do as one likes. They won't live where one wants them to, that's a dreadful vice! Think what a lot of trouble it would save my imagination if I could have put 'Letitia Cromer' in a house in Kilburn, but she utterly declined even to live in England."

"What do you do when they behave like that?"

"I shut my eyes and make her a house in Spain, or wherever she fancies it."

"Without having been there?"

"If one only wrote about places one had seen," she said slowly, "I should have just two places besides London to draw on for scenery."

"But that garden in 'The Whim'?"

She turned to him with pleased eyes and a little colour.

"You have read that, too?"

He felt almost abashed by her ingenuous gratification.

"I read it last night. It's charming."

"It was my first long story, you know, and I always feel a sort of motherly interest in the poor thing, so long out in the world by itself. It's so sad to think how, after the first weeks, one's darlings lie on the library bookshelves, perhaps for months without adventure, to be taken as a last resource by some hard-up subscriber, and finally to drift to unknown watering-places where one reads anything."

"That's not what happens to your books?"

"It happens to better books than mine."

"But about places?" He reverted to the subject with interest. "That garden—you must have seen it. It was too intimate for guess work."

She shook her head. He was really very ignorant on these matters, she thought.

"I could never know a real garden as I knew that. I lived in it three whole weeks, I planted it twice over and made plans of it, and I loved it so much that I made everything happen within its walls and shut out the world. I often wished to see a really beautifully garden," she added dreamily, "the sort I imagined."

"There is one at Wallingford like it."

"Where is Wallingford?"

"It's where I ought to be living, but I live in Italy instead."

"Why do you—if you like England?"

"It suits my work better. Some day I hope to stay in England; till then, Guardini is not without attractions." He smiled thoughtfully, thinking of its many beauties.

Honor shifted her chair. Her eyes grew wistful.

"You look like some one who lives in beautiful places. It must be very wonderful to do that. Can you imagine what it would be like to live in Kilburn all

your life?—I don't mean for me," she added hastily, because I can always see other places without going there—but for people who can't, who have no imagination, and who *want* to see things so badly that it hurts? That does seem hard when the earth's full of beautiful places, and one hasn't to pay to look at them. Of course, if people don't want to see them, it doesn't matter where they live."

With just those few words, she made him aware of the tragedy of a vast number of lives who had made her their spokeswoman! It was like one of Andrea's sketches, half a dozen lines and the whole thing is there before you!

"Since I've read more of your books, I begin to understand what it is holds one in them. It's just that you never say anything you do not actually *see*."

He looked at her questioningly.

"But how could I do anything else? There's no other way possible."

"No, not for you. And I suppose you see beautiful and good things so easily and naturally that you write about them chiefly. Even when you are much older, and write about things that are sad or cruel, you will still make them bearable, because they will be true."

"Like Andrea's sketches?"

He looked a little startled.

"Yes, I think that's what I mean, except—." He looked curiously at her, as if her personality could instruct him. "I wish I understood how it is that Andrea *does* see things so finely."

"I know what you mean," she cried eagerly. "I used to think it distractingly puzzling, too, it's so hard to know what Andrea is and what he isn't. Sometimes I think," she added, with a distant look in her eyes, "that he gives so much that is splendid and good to his work that there's not enough of it left to go round in ordinary life—I mean not enough to be very appar-

ent, as it is in his pictures," she added hastily, convicted of momentary disloyalty to her friend.

Anthony leant forward eagerly. He forgot they were hardly more than strangers, he forgot the disparity in their age, he realised only that here, at last, was some one who shared his beliefs and voiced them more accurately than he had ever been able to do. Still he wanted more yet from her, because confirmation of one's faith is so good a thing to encounter.

"If he knew that, and suffered in consequence, one would like him the better for it, don't you think?"

"But one does!" she returned very quickly. "You must know that! I get dreadfully angry with him—as the other day—but afterwards I'm always sorry, because it's—Andrea, and it seems so ungrateful! You know," she went on, leaning her elbow on her knee again, and gazing intently at a plantain in the grass, "that he doesn't really care for us, or want us as we want him. If we were swept out of his world to-night, he'd replace us with others to-morrow, and yet we want to stay—to be there when some big thing is born! Have you ever seen that?—Andrea, when he's just finished a picture, or when he's just thought of a new one? If one happens to be part of it, it's like being crowned—it's belonging to the things that are really always true."

She spoke in a low, quick voice that quivered slightly as at some experience and emotion that had been hers—and then she drew herself up sharply with a renewed terror that she was betraying her friend.

It is difficult to say how she learned it by merely looking at her companion, but she did learn that here was one whose loyalty was as fixed as her own, and to whom Andrea presented precisely the same enigma as to herself, and who found precisely the same answer. Still her unguarded words called for a fence.

"I don't know why I have spoken of Andrea like

this," she said steadily, "as if he needed that one should make apologies for him! I think it must be that I feel you know him quite as well as I do, and I've never met any one else who does."

"Yes, I have known him all his life. You have said nothing that I have not thought myself about him, but never put so well. If no one says worse things of him behind his back than we have, he need not be alarmed."

She laughed a little at the idea of Andrea minding in any case and then suggested shyly that they should go indoors and see the family.

He consented readily, as he would to any proposition which would ensure his right of entry there again.

The family, as she was well aware, had seen his arrival some time ago, and were vaguely curious as to the identity of Honor's new "chum." She took him into the drawing room which was a square, ugly room with little furniture in it, and what there was, was bad. It was, however, happily destitute of small knick-knacks of the trivial order. Here Anthony was introduced to relays of Passfields as "Andrea's cousin," which was in itself a novelty.

There was Sara in a spotless white linen dress which she had washed that morning on purpose to wear next day, but had been unable to resist the temptation of donning, because she knew she looked well in it.

There was Prudence in a sloppy, green dress and a solemn face, despising the hum-drum things of the world, and there was Alice, brusque and uncompromising, but who eyed the visitor with a curious wistfulness, and wondered if Honor would make any use of her new friend. Finally, Mr. Passfield himself sauntered in and metaphorically ousted the family, talking to the visitor as one man of the world to another, with one eye on his children as much much as to say "you see I am in my element here."

Mr. Passfield struck Anthony as a somewhat

pathetic figure, quite inadequate to the claims of the family, who one and all treated him with the tolerant kindness they might have bestowed on an infant brother. They struck Anthony on the whole as a kindly family, vying with each other to show the attractiveness of some member other than themselves, yet maintaining a deadly attitude of criticism of each one's particular work.

"If my children are destined to bear public honours," said Mr. Passfield, sententiously; "they will at least be able to bear with fortitude the attacks of criticism, to which all good work must submit. I have always encouraged free speech amongst them with this idea, since I myself have been the victim to an over-sensitive mind and inefficient education."

Anthony thought to himself there could have been little needed in the way of encouragement in the matter of free speech. He watched Honor listen unmoved while Sara attacked her power of depicting character, and Prudence flash into technicalities when Honor remarked that her last piece of work resembled nothing so much as an animated mop.

He realised that what ever other people might do, the Passfields took themselves with immense seriousness and that whoever spoke, no matter what their age, was listened to with an attention worthy of weightier judgment. They were patient even of their father's fatuous remarks, but it was obvious that they were all so occupied with their own particular arts and crafts that no other subjects were held of interest. Sara designed dresses for a notable firm. Prudence was going to revolutionise the water-colour world. Peter dealt in enamels, the eldest son (not present) was a portrait painter. Even Alice was accredited with a more than common genius for housekeeping. Anthony also noted that while they all spoke frankly of Honor's work and she was neither ruffled nor

oblivious of it, she never of her own will mentioned it and those revelations which had been given him on the lawn were now dumb behind sealed lips. They all spoke of Andrea with unbound respect and breathless homage such as might pertain to a deity. It was Mr. Passfield who enlightened Anthony as to the origin of that friendship.

"Some years ago," he began, "I wrote a criticism of a picture of his in the *Mowbury Journal*, and he did me the honour to read the notice. I have it now if you would care to see it at some future date. I had ventured to call his attention to a small point which I considered inaccurate in the picture. My frankness seemed to please him and he expressed a wish to see me and discuss the matter. We exchanged views. I need hardly tell you his words were food for the gods! I am proud to think he must have found some interest in mine for we have been friends ever since. It is a privilege which we all highly value and is an unspeakable benefit to my family with their keen artistic faculties. Still I flatter myself it is not entirely one-sided. Mr. Bradon has before now done me the honour to invite my criticisms of his work. I am myself nothing more than a critic, owing to my deficient education in art, still I have possibly obtained a certain faculty for discrimination, which has once or twice been of use even to so renowned a man as your cousin."

He came to a rather full stop. Anthony, recollecting some amusing stories of Andrea's on the subject of amateur criticism, felt a little throb of indignation as he listened. How well he saw the facts of it all. Andrea's quite mocking amusement in discovering the outlook of this simple amateur family and his power of drawing out the very qualities that amused him, his experiments on their credulity. The only

thing remarkable about it was the time the friendship—if so it could be called—had lasted.

Anthony looked at Honor and thought he understood. She had pushed back her chair while her father was speaking and her face was grave, but she made no remark.

When Anthony rose to go she walked to the gate with him and the others did not interfere with what they evidently considered her prerogative. She was silent at first when they got outside and barely answered his questions, but as they neared the gate she stopped and looked up at him.

"Mr. Bradon," she said bravely. "Of course, Andrea *did* come at first to laugh at us. That's just him, isn't it? But after all—I don't think it was all quite laughing—I mean I think he thought that father might have done something and sometimes without knowing it, he does hit on things that are queerly true. But he does not know this, he thinks that Andrea really consults him and it makes a great difference to him." She faltered and her eyes were eloquent with unsaid words. "I don't let Andrea do it if I can help it, but it would be cruel and no earthly use to tell father. Oh, it's hateful of Andrea! I don't mind his doing it to Pru. The little goose ought to know better than be taken in, but he ought not to tell Wilfred he will be a second Rembrandt—Wilfred is just hopelessly amateur. Father adores Andrea," she continued with a little break in her voice, "and he thinks he helps explain him to the public."

Her laugh was the essence of pathos to Anthony. He was glad he had not followed his first impulse and stopped her revelations. There are things better uttered than stored up in the mind.

"Do you think it horrid of me to say all this?" she went on rather wistfully. "I could not bear that you should not understand, or think we were all nothing

but a joke of Andrea's. I am sure he likes us even if he does laugh at us."

"But I never had the least doubt of it. Why, Andrea drops more friends in six months than most men make in six years, and no living soul could keep him merely amused for that time. Of course, he likes you."

"I don't know; we are an amusing family unintentionally," she said, looking away. "All of us trying to do things we can't do and talking about them as if we understood when we don't."

"I can only judge of one member of the family and she is not an amateur, very far from it. She understands her work and she will understand more some day."

"You think I shall grow?" Her eyes were introspective again.

They went on a few steps farther and he was conscious that she was troubled in mind. Then again she stopped and faced him and there was open fear in her eyes that met his with dumb entreaty.

"Do you know I am afraid sometimes of waking up and finding it all gone—my power of seeing things and people and of making up stories, and then having nothing left but *this*." She looked round at the closed in garden and Anthony was aware for the first time of its smallness.

"Now and then," she went on, "I am almost afraid to go on writing for fear it should happen—that I should wear it out."

"No, no!" he told her with a certainty and earnestness that surprised himself. "You will not wear it out. It's a gift that grows in using. Isn't there a story about the man with the five talents? It will grow as you grow, but whether it did or not you would have to write now while you can. You have

something to give people and you must give it. It wouldn't be honest not to."

A curious wonder and joy filled her heart. For the moment the narrow walls of the garden were not; they two stood in wide space and everything was possible to her.

In spite of the family conception of the sacredness and the claims of art, or perhaps because of these sham values and claims, Honor had never held any fixed idea that her own writing was more than a necessary joy to herself. Necessary because her creative faculty was of too high an order to be content with less than concrete form, and joy because she loved and lived easily in the world she created. Such money and such little public acknowledgment as had come her way were pleasant enough accidents, but in no sense the end or origin of her endeavours.

Here was some one who told her that her necessary joy was a duty not to be neglected or denied, who spoke of it as expanding and widening. New impulses, new desires, and a passion to achieve, welled up in her. The garden walls were no longer hidden in a haze, they fell before a new life-time which was to be. She came back to the present with a little sigh of deep content.

"How good you are! I shall never forget you said that."

The gate opened and he went out into the dull road, but he carried with him a knowledge that transformed the dingy neighbourhood. He understood far better than Honor why Andrea kept up his queer friendship with the Passfield family. Also he wondered if Honor herself knew how big a part she played in Andrea's art; how continually the spirit more than the form of her ran through his handiwork (though the form too was there often enough); the spirit of woman whose consciousness is not absorbed in self but

is the consciousness of the world. The woman who is the product of that idea to which men have clung for long ages as worthy of worship—the mother, ever young, ever fruitful; the creator, whose whole life is a “giving out.”

When Anthony had gone Honor returned to the house. They one and all fell on her, demanding explanations and elucidations of their visitor. Had she expected him? Why did not Andrea bring him? Why had he called at all? To all of which she had only negative answers to give. Then they fell to criticising him. He was like Andrea. He was entirely unlike! He was attractive-looking. He was almost ugly! The last remark from Prudence made Honor laugh.

“You goose,” she retorted with kindly scorn. “Mr. Bradon’s face is just like himself and he’s the goodliest man I have ever imagined.”

They cried out at that, pronounced her fanciful and her adjective inadmissible. But she laughed again and escaped back to the garden and her neglected revisal. But the work did not prosper. She could not chain her thoughts as usual; her hero seemed to her at this late moment inexpressive. He did not stand for so much as she had originally thought, the whole thing seemed to her trivial and flat. She felt with despair that she had lost her sense of proportion. What she did not lose, however, was her common sense, which told her that the only thing to restore her balance was to go out and go far. She carried her work indoors and meeting Alice in the hall told her she was going for a walk and might be late.

“He interrupted you,” Alice commented in her outspoken way.

“I don’t mind being interrupted like that,” Honor assured her.

“That doesn’t mean it’s good for you.”

Honor gave her sister a puzzled look, but Alice had no more to say and went her way.

Honor was hardly outside the gate when she ran against Lawrence and on an impulse she said:

"Don't go in, come for a walk with me instead. I am going to Hampstead by 'bus, and then to the Heath and to walk as far as I can."

He nodded and turned and walked by her silently.

They climbed up on the 'bus that eventually brought them within walking distance of the Heath; then, still silently, they pursued their way past the rows of houses up the steep by-ways and new roads as yet unused to their own existence. At last there were at least trees and grass around them instead of bricks and mortar, and Honor sighed with thankfulness.

"Mustn't it be nice to walk out of one's front door into real beautiful country?"

"But no one would ever want to make anything new if they lived in the country," he insisted. "It's all done—finished, perfect!"

She laughed.

"You ridiculous boy! Why, it would make me want to do things more!"

"No, it wouldn't—not me. It's when everything is too horrid for words that I want to play and play and make something which isn't horrid."

"What have you been doing to-day?"

"I sat for two hours to-day—legitimate" (by which he meant for a recognised picture and not for a momentary fancy of his tyrant); "and then he said he was going to lunch, so I went on clearing the attic and mending up the skirting board and settled the place for the piano—if it ever does come."

"Mr. Bradon promised it."

"I know, but suppose *he* didn't really mean me to have it?"

"People wouldn't make promises they didn't really mean to keep to Mr. Bradon."

Her conviction on this point surprised her. Lawrence was inclined to take her word but did not share her conviction. He continued his account of the day.

"I thought I was safe for the rest of the day, but he came back about three."

Here he came to a stop again. There was something suggestive of vast undefined trouble in Lawrence's silences and Honor's face grew compassionate.

"It was only that he was—clever," Lawrence went on hurriedly. "I don't understand half he says when he is like that. I don't want to, it's all upside down. When he went away again—which he did about five, thank goodness—I was all tangled up in my mind. I couldn't have told black from white—or Bach from Verdi," he added with a queer little laugh.

"So you set off to us?"

"For you—I felt I must see some one sane."

"Why do you take him so seriously?" she burst out with sharp impatience. "Why do you let him get on your nerves like this? It is nonsense he talks, and you know it. If it made you sorry for him I could understand but—"

"Nothing could make me sorry for him," Lawrence interposed, with a deadly hardness in his voice.

"That's not a sane thing to say—it's an ugly thing."

"Very likely. In spite of you and him I think truth is ugly."

"But it's not true. Suppose—though it's bad to suppose cruel things—suppose he got hurt so that he could never paint any more?"

"And had to lie looking at what he had done and *wanting* to paint again? That would be hell for him—why should I mind?"

Honor slipped her hand under his arm very gently.

"Think, Lawrence," she pleaded; "just one minute.

Remember when you were ill and when he took you to France and when he painted the 'My Kingdom is not of This World.' Think of that picture."

They walked on in silence. They were well past the houses now and at this hour the Heath was practically deserted. The evening was putting the day to bed like a tired child and even here, so near the haunts of men, some of the peace of the great country stretching out at their feet, crept up and laid a quiet hand on their souls. With one impulse they took seats under a may tree and sat quietly there.

Honor was profoundly sorry for Lawrence, but she did not take him too seriously. She knew the spasmodic nature of his revolt against his father. He talked in terms of exaggeration because it was his nature to use such terms rather than that they really represented his thoughts. Still, she felt he must recognise these word-toys, he used to lightly, were rather dangerous safety valves.

And because there was a strip of gold and rose in the west, and because the scents of the evening enmeshed his consciousness and because it was so nice and jolly to sit there with some one who understood and didn't rub him the wrong way, Lawrence's violent hate died out and long phrases of music slipped into him mind, conjured there by the sunset-light as words were conjured to Honor's mind, and he forgot his father and his wrongs.

"Do you know the Fugue by Bach," he said, half under his breath. "That's like the sky over there?" He hummed the motive. "It's just life this—just the world looking like it does now. What does it matter if people are beastly sometimes?—this sort of thing goes on. I don't want him to have a bad time really, it would spoil this, but oh, Honor! when things are lovely and quiet and perfect like this it makes one ache all over to say them. I *was* wrong just now."

"To say them in music?"

"It's the only way they can be said—to me. I want to feel sure they are there—the beautiful things—just as certainly as that they are *here*."

"And I must be sure they are in words, and Andrea, that they are in paint," she murmured, but he did not hear; he was listening to his music echoing from every spreading tint of the sky as it gave itself to the grey embrace of night.

She too felt desire creep into her heart—desire to discover just what this beauty stood for in regard to human life, what emotions it would cool, what excite. Surely, surely, it was not a little thing to listen and find its place in humanity; surely it would be a sin against truth to misrepresent her, or to arouse the wrong thoughts in the watcher, to attribute the wrong emotions to any one of the vast concord of individualities that might sit and gaze as they were gazing at the peace of the evening. What did it matter that her people were only dream people, princesses and princes of a pretty shadowland. The thing that did matter was that they should be real, that they should think their own thought, not hers; that the sunset clouds should move them each and all differently. It was only the intimate knowledge of the human soul that could secure this, the knowledge born of intuition not experience, no life were long enough to compass it else.

"Let's go on further," said Lawrence presently, and she agreed. They scaled still other heights, walked on and on into the dusk and then coming to a turn in the road looked and saw the dark far below them, spangled with points of light broken with a rosy haze like the smoke of a sacrifice and each mind instantly repainted the scene for itself, one in vivid words, the other in vast stupendous chords of joy.

It was past eleven when Honor reached home and

bade Lawrence good-night. It was later still when he entered the house in Abbey Road. The servants had gone to bed and there was no sign of his father. There was no sign of supper either.

CHAPTER V.

OBLIGATION.

ANTHONY seemed in no hurry to return to Italy. It was true the matter that had brought him over was uncompleted, but he did not seem to take particular pains to hasten it, while he did take pains to cement his new acquaintance with the Passfield family.

There was a theatre party—presumably given by Andrea, to which Honor and Alice had been asked, and later Anthony sent Mr. Passfield and Honor tickets for an evening at a famous art club and made it his business to see that Honor, at all events, was not bored.

Also he found her at Abbey Road one afternoon though that was pure chance. Since his talk with her he ceased to fan his inner spirit to anger against Andrea, but he did quietly what he could to ensure Lawrence having at least no opposition to following his own line of life so long as it did not too obviously run counter to his father's requirements.

Then, just when he was thinking there was no possible excuse for his delay in returning to work, he had an offer from his Wallingford tenant of the use of Wallingford for the summer.

It was a great temptation, for Anthony loved his old home and regarded it as the haven of his distant hopes when all that held him now should relinquish its hold on him and leave him again his own master. He had no idea at all of the real strength of the passion for investigation which bound him.

He went to see Lady Lewisham one day and told her he had compromised over the Wallingford question.

"I've accepted Rosshaw's offer for six weeks," he said; "then I must get back to work. I couldn't have managed that except that Nicholls has chosen to spend his holiday at Guardini and see what we have got through there, so Leonardo will not be left to his own resources."

"Nicholls? That's the man who got mixed up in a poison case and that you took on as a forlorn hope, isn't he?"

Lady Lewisham never forgot these things which ought to be forgotten, or remembered those things which many people wished she'd remember. She adored Anthony hardly less than she adored Andrea, but she dearly liked to say things to him that he would much rather she left unsaid.

"Nicholls hadn't anything to do with the case," he remarked quietly. "Why should it be easier for people to remember that he was said to be concerned in it than to remember he was not? He is a first-rate man and he's in charge of the laboratory in Roumania."

"What? Another establishment? How much does your little hobby cost you, Anthony?"

"I expect about as much as other men's hobbies."

She laughed and bore no ill-will for the pointed evasion.

Lady Lewisham lived in old Hampstead, and had a garden that had figured in picture and story. They were pacing up and down its green walks now, and the sharp attacks on his peace of mind were punctuated with silent moments of admiration for some particularly new glory of colour or wonder of form.

Her next remark certainly took Anthony aback.

"Do you know," she asked abruptly, "that that boy of Andrea's is allowed to call himself Bradon?"

Her sharp little birdlike eyes watched him closely, but made nothing of his impassiveness.

"It's not his fault it's not his name by rights,"

Anthony returned slowly, after a slight pause. "He's a nice boy, and he will make a name for himself some day, I hope. Meanwhile, why shouldn't he use ours?"

His companion put on her glasses, though one could have sworn they were unneeded except that they concealed the humorous twinkle in her eyes.

After careful scrutiny she remarked.

"Why don't you marry, Anthony?"

It was her third and last direct assault and before it his impassiveness vanished and left him speechless.

"Well?" she insisted impatiently. "I really want to know."

"I haven't thought of such a thing for years," he protested feebly.

"Then you ought to have done so. You are thirty-seven, nearly thirty-eight. You are the head of the family—in fact, there's no one near at all but you and Andrea—and if you don't marry it all comes to him. Do you go so far as to accept this Lawrence as your heir?"

Lady Lewisham was no doubt a very terrible old lady indeed, but it was as useless to resent her brutal frankness as it was to resist Andrea's selfish egotism. They were part and parcel of the individuality. He had, however, blanched a little at her words. That thirty-seven of hers was such an incredible accusation. He answered the last part of her speech finding it easier than the rest.

"No," he said, in his curiously unexcitable voice, "I don't go so far as that. What I meant about the name just now was that Andrea was the person to blame, and I can't see why Lawrence should pay that penalty—such as it is—for him. But as to marrying—that's not such an easy matter."

She laughed shortly.

"Most men seem to find it so."

They stopped at this moment beneath a tall clump

of blue delphiniums embowered with a climbing wealth of "seven sister" roses. The pure blue and white against the paler blue of the sky suddenly brought Honor Passfield to Anthony's mind. He let his mind rest there indeed. It was more acceptable ground than the suggestion of his outspoken relation.

"It's your duty to marry."

She evidently meant to drive her suggestion home and Anthony moved restlessly.

"I daresay you are right," he admitted reluctantly.

"There are no more Bradons in the direct line at all?"

There was a hardly restrained fierceness in her voice. Anthony understood at last she was not making wilful raids on his forbearance or peace, or considering him at all. Her concern was quite otherwise. It lay with the name and fortune of her own cousin's family. Her words seemed flung against and echoed back from the desolate tragedy of her own life—a childless widow whose marriage had been a poor refuge from an unrealizable affection.

"I will think about it," he assured her hurriedly; "but I can't promise to marry straight off. To begin with, I don't know any girls at all."

Then his eyes were conscious of the delphiniums again.

"At least, I know Miss Passfield," he added conscientiously. "I wonder if you have read her books, cousin Laura?"

Apparently she had heard of them but not read them. She asked him point blank where he had met her.

"I met her at tea one day."

He could not clearly have explained why he did not add Andrea's name as their introducer.

His vagueness did not escape her, perhaps it recalled her to the charge.

"As you are staying in England you'd better spend your time looking for a wife."

Anthony groaned.

"Laura, have some mercy—it's my holiday!"

She faced round on him.

"You are treating it as a joke," she exclaimed fiercely. "I tell you it's every bit as much your business to marry as to go back to this germ-business of yours—more so. Do you think it's for nothing a man leaves a good name behind him as your father and your grandfather did, and others before them? Do you think that you can step into all they made for you and avoid obligations? You Brandons have traditions and faiths and ideas, that are worth handing down, and no one knows that better than yourself, Anthony. If Andrea was a respectable creature with a long family and a decent wife, I'd never open my lips, but he's not, he's older than you too, and I won't see your father's name die out for want of a word in time!"

"Andrea at least has added laurels to the name," he put in quickly. His lips were rather tightly compressed and a certain rigidity was apparent in him. "If I marry it won't be because I want to keep Andrea out of things."

"No one imagined it would be." Her voice was sharp and querulous now under the goad of a sudden misgiving. After all, had she gone the right way to work on Anthony? It struck her with curious vividness that she knew very little as to what was the right way to manage Richard Bradon's son, though she would have had no difficulty in managing Andrea or, at least, in knowing how far he was manageable. It hurt her in her secret soul to know it.

They walked on a little in silence and coming to a seat she stopped:

"I'll sit down," she said tremulously. "If I've made

you angry, Anthony, remember I'm an old woman and I was very fond of your father."

He had never thought of her as old and was seized with compunction for he had been angry as she had divined.

So they made their peace there, in the sunny garden facing the group of delphiniums and white roses, and Anthony promised he would think over her words. He seemed composed enough outwardly when they parted, but he walked back the greater part of the way, for he wanted to think and he could do that best walking.

The result of Lady Lewisham's free speech was that Anthony went down to Wallingford two days later in a perturbed state of mind, conscious that his inner self—the self of daily tried companionship—was already casting longing glances towards Villa Guardini, with its limited responsibilities, its neglected germs and pleasant silences unhaunted by the echo of Lady Lewisham's decided "You ought to marry." At Wallingford there was no escaping that reiterated echo. Every stone seemed to have caught the words and to repeat them a hundred times a day with soft sibilant insistence. The portraits on the walls preached it solemnly to him and his familiar self rebelled against coercion.

He had no aversion to marriage. Far from it, he had even a great and simple belief in it as "The Source of Happiness," and a reverence towards it that drew back abashed before the prospect of a marriage of obligation. Such too, was his ignorance of woman that he believed the right way to her heart was through the gates of friendship and it worried him that he could see no opportunity or time for such a slow adventure in his life.

On the first solitary evening in his old home he wandered round it, noting how this and that piece of

furniture was shifted to suit new needs and tastes, and feeling humbly grateful to fate that had sent him a tenant so admirable that his fancies in wall papers cut no dissevering line between childhood and the present, so exactly did such renovations suit their place and object.

The second evening he found himself gazing at the case that contained the famous miniatures of past Mrs. Bradons, and here the voice of his old cousin became deeply reproachful. He looked at them with rather wistful eyes. His forbears seemed to have no difficulty in finding beautiful women to preside over their house and bear them sons. Yet there was something curiously unsatisfying to him about that gallery of pretty faces. It might have been the fault of the delicate work that reduced them all to the same dainty type, or it might have been that his ancestors had a preference for the type that essentially suited the art that portrayed them. To Anthony they one and all lacked that vital sincerity, that keen expectancy and joy of life that would certainly appear in any successful portrayal of the woman he, of his free choice, would place there as his contribution to the generations to come. Other thoughts also drifted into view as he looked, recollections of other people, of remarks of old childish favourites amongst the pretty ladies.

As he contemplated the portrait of his mother, her personality was re-lit for him. It had been pronounced an unusually good piece of work when it was done. The dark, wavy hair, the delicate, fragile face, the perfect colouring of her lips—even now Anthony never thought of looking further than nature for that particular red, or that faultless complexion. He recalled her dreamy eyes and the placid content that nothing ever disturbed, except her sister-in-law's rosy accounts of her life in Paris. He could see her very clearly indeed, remembered also, as an early recollec-

tion, how his mother had really liked Andrea and considered him beautiful—not to the exclusion of her own son, of course, but still to a remarkable degree—and now this liking had not been without its influence on him. He remembered, too, how he and his mother had adored father and husband, to an extent that would have spoiled most men. Yet there had been a difference in their respective points of view other than that of relationship and age. Anthony had adored his father as a hero and law-giver, as the personification of kindly justice. Mrs. Bradon had adored her husband as the responsible part of herself, the part that stood and talked and went about the world fulfilling all the disagreeable tasks that would otherwise have troubled her so greatly.

Anthony had been genuinely grieved when his mother died, but he did not vision a future Mrs. Bradon built on those lines mentally or physically. Looking round at the dark panelled, comfortable library he made a serious effort to place there any one of the charming girls that he had met in his last two visits to London. Girls, that even he—modest as he was—knew very well he could marry at will, of their respected mammas at least. No amount of imagination, however, would conjure up the vision he desired. With seeming irrelevance it struck him the room bore a strong resemblance to a room described in one of Honor Passfield's books. Perhaps the thought was really suggested by the sight of the garden glimmering in the fading light through the framing windows. The suggestion of her was certainly there and his more troublesome thoughts made a dash for freedom. So instead of the vexed question of marriage he considered what a pleasure it would be to show Honor Passfield this garden, so planned and built after her own vision. It needed no effort at all to picture how her eyes would smile with quick pleasure and how

she would whisper half under her breath, "Oh, I knew there were places like this!"

Such confirmation of her own imaginings would give her confidence for bolder flights and it was for such flights he held that she now stood primed with wings that quivered and fluttered, needing just the slight aid to faith that he perhaps might give her.

Once that thought found place in his mind it was a matter of instinct with him to carry it into effect. For Need had only to wave her meagre garment in his sight, for him to respond almost automatically, if he could recognise any right to answer at all. In this case he sat down and wrote to Honor Passfield, and the action had the mysterious effect of liberating him from the persistent echo of Lady Lawisham's disturbing words.

He never doubted she would come and he warned the housekeeper of intended visitors before an answer reached him. Also he spent the next day carefully examining every point of view in the garden that he might be sure she should miss no particular beauty there. He had been absent so many summers from England that perhaps he was unduly impressed with the charm of his own possession. Yet Wallingford was certainly something beyond the average and there was little doubt that to Honor—mental millionaire as she was—it would seem like stepping into one of her own dreams come true.

It was not till the advent of a post that might possibly have brought an answer and did not, that the idea she might refuse or be unable to come struck him. He was at once inexplicably aware of a possible grey-ness gathering over the garden, blotting out some of its charms. He realised, with surprise, that he had no use for beautiful things that existed only for himself, and that Wallingford was waste ground if he might not show it to some one. Here his natural

honesty stepped in and insisted on the fact that it was not *some one* but Miss Passfield in particular whose company he desired. Honesty went no further than that at present, indeed, there was no further road mapped out for it to travel. He was abreast with unknown country, but he neither knew he had arrived there nor that there was anywhere to arrive.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INVITATION.

Alice Passfield's love affairs did not progress very fast. It may have been the fault of Mr. Timmins, or it may have been due to Alice's own indecision. Mr. Trimmin's part consisted in calling on Fridays and Sundays with an offering of flowers or fruit. Such members of the family as happened to be at home avoided the drawing room on those occasions with a persistence that troubled Alice, who read in it more than tactful assumption that Mr. Timmins required a free field and no company. He, however, looked upon it as a show of unexpected sympathy, and argued favourably therefrom. The two would sit opposite each other and discuss the details in the daily paper, the dearness of living and the doings of the family—Alice's family that is; Mr. Timmins had none. Sometimes he confided to her the troubles of the boot and shoe trade. His was a very select and superior business, a half dozen shoes in a private looking window in the neighbourhood of Conduit Street and a clientèle mostly titled and solvent. After a while Mr. Timmins invariably asked Alice if he were interrupting her in any duties and offered, if so, to betake himself to the young people.

Alice always said that she was not busy at that hour, but she was generally willing and even anxious to accompany him to the society of the said young people, which practically meant escorting him to the gate.

Left to herself Alice would be a bit short-tempered for a while, alive to impossibilities that did not exist when next morning brought its routine of daily

worries; the grumblings of Ann, the short-weighted joint, the indifference of Prudence to the condition of her stockings and Wilfred's demand for new shirts. The call of the gas man for arrears invariably melted the last impossibility of the time. She told herself and she told her sisters with a frequency that was impressive, that she was sick of the whole thing, that she was not a conjurer to make a half-crown go as far as five shillings, though she contrived to do so with a persistency that was as marvellous in its way as any juggling of Cinquevelli's. Indeed, Honor sighed often at the thought that she might, sooner or later, have to display as good an imitation of the same skill as she could compass for the general benefit.

Alice was, however, less selfish than she let it appear. There would be no occasion for Mrs. Timmins making one half-crown do the work of two and many occasions on which the Passfield half-crown could be enlarged without much trouble for its strenuous task. Neither that consideration nor the daily monotonous struggle taken by themselves would have lent weight to Mr. Timmins' wooing, but together, there is no doubt they did exercise more influence than Mr. Timmins himself at this particular junction of affairs. Alice, therefore, continued to allow herself to be courted and to tell herself more decidedly than ever that however pretty Honor's books might be they did not in the least resemble life.

Honor continued the revision of her book without much enthusiasm, but she shut her teeth and stuck to it. The story might not represent a very wide outlook on life, but at least it was a pleasant one and she was now convinced it was a possible one.

"Why don't you write books about every day sort of people?" Alice remarked one morning. She was clearing away breakfast to give Ann more time for necessary duties of the day. Honor, who was labori-

ously sharpening a pencil with the bread knife looked up bewildered. The attack was so sudden.

"We know all about every day people," she said in a troubled voice. "It's much more amusing to read about people we don't know."

"But it doesn't help one."

Alice swept off the empty bacon dish remorselessly.

"That's not a penknife, Honor."

"I know," replied Honor meekly. "I lent my knife to Prudence yesterday."

"Very stupid of you! But why don't you?"

Honor mentally stepped back to the previous subject. The Passfield family were used to this sort of mental exercise.

"I never thought about helping any one, only about amusing them, you see. How could I help? I've no experience."

"You say sensible things enough when you give your mind to it. If you wrote them one could refer to them."

Honor laughed.

"What have I ever said that's the least real use, my dear?"

"Heaps of things—what you really think about marriage and love, and that sort of thing."

"Well, all my nice people marry."

Alice sniffed. It may not have been ladylike, but she did.

"You deal too much with nice people. I want to know what ordinary nasty ones do—that's all."

She slammed the sideboard door rather viciously.

"You are thinking of Mr. Timmins," Honor suggested, not very felicitously.

Alice agreed she was.

"I am no nearer," she confessed wearily. "It's like this. I want to know what the result would be all the way round, and I'm not clever like the rest of

you to pretend things to myself before they happen. I think books are meant for people like me who can't imagine."

This was such an entirely new idea to Honor that she sat meditating over it in silence, then becoming aware Alice was still without the consolation her soul desired, she went up and hugged her.

"You dear old thing! I am not good at imagining some things myself. I can't see you as Mrs. Timmins. I wish I could if that's what you want."

"Oh well!" Alice took up the crumb scoop. "The gas man will call again to-day, I suppose."

Honor again jumped mentally and physically too.

"But, my dear, you won't let that sort of thing count, will you?"

"What sort of thing? It all counts. It has to."

With that she left the room. Honor remained, trying to assimilate matters old and new. Thoughts which she recognised as remote rambles in her mind never seriously faced either as trespassers or visitors were now dragged into prominence by Alice's blunt words.

The day was chilly and grey for June, but Honor preferred writing out of doors unless it rained. She put on a coat and betook herself to her favourite spot. An hour later the postman, entering with a letter, found her nibbling her pencil and drawing odd figures between whiles on her paper. Her work had not progressed much.

He was an old postman and he knew the Passfield family with an intimacy that was unusual in a mere London automaton. So he came across the grass to her saying, "Letter for you, Miss," and might have added: "In a writing I don't remember seeing before," as surely as any country postman.

Honor took her letter, looked at it aimlessly and then a little colour sprang to her face. She had seen

the writing, and the postmark was Wallingford. She opened it eagerly and with considerable surprise. Why should Mr. Bradon write to her?

"Dear Miss Passfield:

"It's a mistake to remain in London during June. I have managed to save a little of the month, but am abusing myself for former neglect of her charms in England and the country. Here am I revelling in the very garden you wrote about in 'The Garden of Desires,' or so I wish to think. I should prefer making sure on that point, however. Could you be induced to come down with Lawrence for a long day, see it, and give me your verdict? There's a piano for Lawrence and the garden for you, and Mrs. Grey, the housekeeper, tells me she is equal to as many visitors as I choose to put upon her. I only require two at present. Any day this week would suit me. I foresee difficulties in getting Lawrence but am sure you are better able to cope with them than I am. I have your books here to keep me company and continue to find in them the elixir of youth. Please come and assure me that this, and none other, is the garden of your vision. You must not count this vain glory on my part. It is my tenant who is responsible for the beauty round me. I feel as if it were my place to offer him rent instead of so greedily demanding it. As far as I can remember my father was no gardener. I recollect brightly striped ribbons fringing the lawns and fancy the gardener's taste leaned towards scarlet, yellow and blue, with a prodigious amount of onions. More I cannot recall. The garden was old enough but it has been made oldfashioned by this admirable tenant, who is very up-to-date in such matters. Please come and see if I have exaggerated.

"I suggest the 11.42 from Paddington.

Yours sincerely,

"Anthony Bradon."

Honor had heard through Lawrence that Mr. Bradon had left London. She had settled down to work again after his first call with renewed zest. A temporary belief in her favorite characters had returned. They might be insufficient but they were possible. Alice's outburst that morning had worried her cruelly and she had caught herself actually wishing that Andrea's cousin had not so completely melted from her horizon. Lo and behold! he had not melted at all but was charmingly accessible. She dropped the letter in her lap and sat gazing before her with shining eyes and parted lips, thinking of the garden, of the long day in the country, and the very real pleasure of meeting Mr. Bradon again.

"It will just help me finish off the book," she thought.

Whether that attitude would have pleased Anthony is extremely doubtful.

Work must go for the morning, however. It was incumbent on her to go to Abbey Road and secure Lawrence with as little delay as possible. She went indoors first to tell Alice the news.

Alice merely nodded and did not seem much interested, but when Honor had gone she stopped making pastry and stood rubbing her floured hands on each other thoughtfully and her mouth drooped. It was not a pretty mouth at any time and she looked more cross than pathetic. Yet if she had been one of Honor's characters her author would most certainly have found her pathetic at that moment.

Andrea was at work and in one of his cruel, hard moods. The servant who opened the door told Honor first of all that Mr. Bradon and Mr. Lawrence were engaged and she could not see them. He, however, had to allow her to ascertain the truth of this for herself.

'Andrea shouted, "Go away!" in response to her knock, and then asked who it was.

Since it was only Honor she could come in if she didn't bother.

Andrea was at work in dead earnest this morning and did not even look round to greet her. Lawrence was posing for him in a tattered dress and his face had the white drawn, weary look that Andrea found so useful for this particular picture. The boy moved just a shade as Honor entered and Andrea remarked in his biting sarcastic voice, that if Honor didn't interfere with him, her coming need hardly disturb Lawrence.

But Honor, glancing sharply at Lawrence, had every intention of interfering.

"Andrea, you brute!" she cried indignantly, "how long have you been at this on a stretch?"

"I don't know and I don't care. For Heaven's sake hold your tongue," he returned sharply, painting for dear life. "I'll never get this just so right again. Keep still Lawrence, damn you."

Andrea very seldom swore, only when his work absorbed him beyond wont. It did so now. Honor looking at the canvas caught her breath; she knew enough to understand the wonder of what was growing there. But then she saw Lawrence again.

"You must stop, Andrea," she insisted swiftly and quietly; "he's going to faint."

"One moment—steady, Lawrence, hold on—that's too low, lift—Oh, you little devil!"

For Honor sprang up on the stage and pulled Lawrence back into the chair behind him. He sank there in a heap, quivering and grey, past fear even for the time.

Honor turned on Andrea fiercely. He was wiping his brush with a little grim smile and an angry light in his eyes.

"I'll beware how I let you in again, my dear," he remarked in a drawling voice.

"And I, how I come," she retorted quickly. She was not in the least afraid of Andrea. "And I'll never sit for you again—never!"

"You are not a good sitter, anyhow," he told her indifferently, still too angry to care for facts. He took not the slightest notice of his unfortunate model who was slowly picking up the threads of life again under Honor's ministrations. Then he stepped back and looked at his work.

"Come here!" he said in a different tone. And she came. They both stood looking. Andrea said nothing, but he indicated a particular subtle bit of painting with his brush. Honor nodded. Her education in the matter of art was sufficiently developed for that much understanding.

"It's there," he said in a low voice, "the particular moment,—I almost gave it up,—the sticking on to a small thing by the sheer strength of endurance. I have often wanted to get it. It's there, Honor!"

It was. It moved her strangely but it moved her more to recognize that he knew what he had done; understood that he had not only pinned this moment to canvas for the world to see, but understood the moment itself.

"It's like the picture at Guardini," he added, "but it's better, if anything. That's the spirit that won't be conquered; this is the idea of endurance; it's a jolly sight harder to get hold of."

Honor drew back. The ever recurring puzzle of it all hurt her cruelly. There was the picture and there was Andrea with his wonderful insight—and there was Lawrence lying still weak and exhausted on the stage, and Andrea had forgotten his existence. She was not angry any more, there were tears in her eyes; though she did not realise it, they were for Andrea

and not for Lawrence. But Andrea who was aware of them thought they were called up by his picture and was pleased. He tossed a not unkind command to Lawrence over his shoulder to go and get decent and proceeded to clean his palette and examine critically the details of his work from minute to minute.

"How do you manage to do it?" Honor asked the question more of herself than of him.

"On my word, I don't know," he told her naively. "I put there, or try to put there, the lights I see on the real thing. Sometimes I can, like this morning, sometimes I can't."

"I don't mean that," she was clear of the picture spell now. "I mean how can you be so cruel to Lawrence?"

"Poof!" he shrugged his shoulders. "It's not every day, it doesn't hurt him to get a bit tired now and then. Fellows do themselves up a great deal more over stupid things like football and races and things," he wandered off into vagueness. The matter really did not trouble him in the least.

"That's different," Honor persisted; "it's their own will, but this is not Lawrence's will."

Andrea laughed.

"No, my dear, it's not any man's will to earn his own living by the sweat of his brow, though we have it on very good authority he has to do it. Lawrence earns his, I don't grudge it him."

"I should think not," indignantly. "But all the same it's not the work he was meant to do."

She suddenly remembered the purpose of her visit and struck while the iron was hot.

"Anyhow, you can't grudge him a day off after this. I want him to come down to Wallingford with me for a long day."

"To where?" demanded Andrea, turning on his heel and facing her with evident interest.

"Wallingford. Mr. Bradon has asked Lawrence and me to spend the day there."

"It's the first I've heard of it," he remarked, quietly lighting a cigarette.

Honor laughed.

"Of course it is, I've only just had the letter. It's for any day this week. I came at once to fix it up with Lawrence."

That curious look of amusement in Andrea's eyes flickered unsteadily. He was regarding her with thoughtful mien.

"I wonder why Anthony thought of asking you to Wallingford?" He made the remark hardly as if he expected an answer, but she had one for him. It seemed to her so very simple.

"He thought I would like to see the garden."

Andrea bowed his head gravely. That might be Honor's solution. But to his mind the question remained unanswered.

"Well, can he come?"

Just for the fraction of a second he meant to refuse. He did not know that he wanted her to go, and he perceived Lawrence was a necessity, but then his inward pleasure at watching the odd antics of his fellow-beings prevailed even at the expense of his own doubts. He gave a curious little laugh.

"Lawrence? Oh yes. Take him when you like. You always do get your own way, young lady; it's a pity you don't know better what it is."

Which enigmatical remark was inexplicable to her. Her mind, however, was revolving other matters.

"Why don't you paint ordinary every day people like one meets in the street?" she asked him with a suddenness that linked her to Alice.

"I would if they suggested anything to me. As a

rule they don't. They are just wooden dolls who have life and don't know what to do with it."

Honor nodded. She understood that very well.

"But if they saw their dullness on paper, mightn't they wake up?"

Andrea laughed.

"Perhaps. It wouldn't matter to me. Why should I bother to show them what asses they look like. It's the writing Johnnies who do that."

"I don't."

"You aren't a writing Johnnie, you are a sort of unfledged poet. You don't count."

"That's brutal."

"Lord, no one wants you to count that way. We prefer you as you are—Anthony and I."

He shot a quick look at her as he named his cousin, but she was oblivious of any ulterior meaning in his words.

"There are quite enough realistic writers," he went on, still watching her closely, "and painters too. And they glue their noses so fast to the ugly bits of life they can't see beauty is every bit as true. You stick to your own job."

She felt comforted. Both Andrea and his cousin seemed to have a pleasant power of giving her confidence. Her eyes turned to the picture and her thoughts to Lawrence.

"Supposing you made Lawrence ill, what would you do then?"

"Find another model if I could," he sighed, at the mere thought of the difficulties of the task.

"It would be far easier to take more care of him now."

"No, it wouldn't. I can't afford to think of people when I am at work. Do stop it, there's a good girl. Lawrence and I understand one another."

"Oh!" it was an "Oh!" vibrating with indignation.

"At least, I understand what I want of him which is all that matters. Make Anthony show you the miniatures at Wallingford. Tell him I said so."

"Are they very special ones?"

"In point of view of number and family sentiment. It's a tradition for the presiding Mrs. Bradon to be painted in that finicking manner."

"I like miniatures."

"Of course!"

"Don't be horrid!"

"I am not. I am truthful."

"And there is no Mrs. Bradon now to be painted?"

"There is not—at present."

Honor was silent so long that Andrea interrupted her thoughts brusquely:

"Well?"

"I was thinking," said Honor slowly, with a far off look in her eyes, "What sort of woman I should make Mr. Bradon marry in a book."

"Have you settled?"

"No, I shall have to alter her, I think."

"You have pinned him down already, then?"

Honor shook her head.

"It's not that. He was there before in a way—the kind of man."

"Who will you give him?" he insisted.

She looked really troubled with knitted brows.

"I haven't got the right type. I don't know it."

Andrea laughed.

"Wait till you have been to Wallingford."

Honor sprang up.

"I wish Lawrence would be quick," she said. "I've got to get back to dinner."

She went out to the landing and shouted and presently Andrea heard her run upstairs. She felt they might settle things more easily by themselves. Also she wanted to inspect the piano which was now

occupying a big empty room next to Lawrence's bedroom. Lawrence showed it with pride and played her Shumann's *Novelette* to show its tone. He played execrably because he was so tired, but Honor was not inclined to find fault. She thought the piano perfection and when Lawrence stopped with a bang of wrong notes and flung his music across the room, and swore at his father with passionate fervour, Honor put her arms on his shoulder and rubbed her face against his and told him to let the old music alone and come out and buy some new socks as she had ordered him to do last week.

When they went down Andrea had gone out.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GARDEN OF DESIRES.

THAT possible shadows that might have engulfed Wallingford melted away before the quaint little note of acceptance which at last arrived from Honor and Lawrence jointly. For the latter's benefit Anthony routed out from the locked-up room, piles of long stored music, and for his own benefit he gave orders that on the day of his invited guests' visit he would not be at home to any of the chance callers who had begun to find out the advent of the owner of Wallingford. The significance that the housekeeper and butler found in these small facts entirely escaped the notice of their master.

The day and the hour came at last and he welcomed two shy and clearly embarrassed guests; the one shy under the stress of new experiences, the other from acute self-consciousness. Just at first Honor was certainly very nervous, she was aware of an ignorance of precedence and a lack of certainty as to the right thing to do which had never troubled her in her life before and which certainly never troubled her heroines in the most unusual situations. For example, when Anthony asked her if she would rather go and take off her hat, or come straight into the garden, the moment she had given her emphatic choice to the latter suggestion, she was seized with doubts as to whether the other had not been the right and proper course. She conquered with difficulty her instinct to let Mr. Bradon pass before her by right of superior age and position, and that frank good-fellowship which had been hers in familiar surroundings vanished tem-

porarily before the comparative dignity and luxury that seemed to exude from the presence of the grave butler and footman. Both the housekeeper and butler at Wallingford were part of the letable assets of the place and were emphatically of the Bradon establishment. But once outside and with the first glimpse of the garden, the foolish embarrassments fell from her. It would have been impossible in any case, for her to have remained long self-conscious as it was for poor Lawrence to avoid it.

Lawrence's aspect towards this visit, which had been one of pure pleasure in the first instance, had changed as the day approached.

The doubts which had beset his precocious boyhood and loomed miserably through bitter scenes with his father, passed from the blessed region of half realised truths into that of unwelcome certainty when Andrea had spoken in his light scornful way of this projected visit to a house he had no business to enter. Lawrence could put discount on Andrea's words but the queer mocking glint in his father's eyes was more telling than words. The sudden certainty of his own position in the Bradon family had its effect on Lawrence. He did not resent it as something new but his persistent resentment against his father gathered fresh food on which to feed.

His pride did not suffer, perhaps he had none in this respect, but that sensitive veiled personality of his, which knew no friend nor intimate, found a new veil woven between itself and the world which was so full of unkind things.

His admiration for Mr. Bradon, however, increased fourfold and at this particular period of his life it was of incalculable value to him that there should be one man to stand for all those qualities which were so deplorably absent in his daily surroundings. It spoke volumes for his precocity that he thought it

wonderful Mr. Bradon should have asked him at all to the house of his fathers. But Anthony had thought nothing about the matter. His concern had been to find a companion who would least interfere with Honor's enjoyment and it was not till he had reason to mention Lawrence by name to the old butler that he recollected the advent of a young Mr. Bradon would give rise to some interest in the older members of the household. There had been the merest flicker across Truman's eyes and a little ponderous lingering on his step as he retired to the back premises. Later on, when the newer element of the servants' hall were out of hearing, he paid a visit to Mrs. Grey, the house-keeper, and with shut doors and bated breath they had talked over dates and rumours of Mr. Andrea and his ways.

Anthony had made no miscalculation in the pleasure he was giving Honor. Remotely in pictures, even more remotely from the windows of a railway carriage, Honor had had glimpses of those old houses of which England is full, which hold a grace and a glamour that deepens with added years and which are as no other home, however lovely in any other country. She had dwelt and moved in such in books, she had planned them through and through in her own dream-land, but she had never actually crossed the threshold of any private house older or less commonplace than her own Kilburn home. Every quality which went to make up the charm of these Halls and Manors and Granges of England was strange to her in actual fact and familiar to her in fancy.

The charm is undeniable. You will not find the same in the later palaces which are springing up over the country. More definable beauty may be, more correct art, more comfort, but never that sense of leisure and repose, of freedom and privacy that was marked by the atmosphere of Wallingford.

It had been built somewhere in the seventeen hundreds of red brick lined well with solid oak, an easy, comfortable kind of house which had belonged since the day it was built to the same family—people who courted no new honours, who were contented to be well off and to follow their hobbies independent of fashion and newer ways. The house lay far back from the road on sunny slopes of beech-crowned hills, with its gardens and wooded walks trailing leisurely over the land. It turned its back with quiet disapproval on the growing riverside village that absorbed its name and clung round the outer edges of its garment with ill-bred persistence.

Honor stood still and gave a long "Oh!" of joy when, having passed over the wide, soft lawns, they came to a sunk garden so glowing with colour one might think a handful of jewels had been spilt on the green enamel of the grass. After that she unconsciously walked a little in front of the other two, and Anthony let her wander at will and abrogated the task of showman. So she trod the paths forgetful of all save her dear people who had walked there before her. She saw them moving there with their several histories, their weaknesses, their sorrows, their pleasure, with their inarticulate striving towards some nobility their creator's soul held as a foundation of life itself. Dream people perhaps, but not puppets nor naked travesties of God's world of men and women.

So they passed through the sunk garden, the rose garden, the rock garden, the wild garden, and each step of the way Lawrence seemed to lose a bit of his shy reserve and reveal to Anthony a new personality, a quaint, elfish, charming self that broke as easily through the momentarily dispelled clouds of his daily life as the sunshine on an April day. Once he laughed, so musically, so wholeheartedly, that Honor in front turned back, smiled and laughed with him.

He would dart off from Anthony's side when some distant object struck his fancy to examine it with keen interest. Once Anthony, seeing him standing gazing down at a bed of blue nemophila, joined him. Lawrence's face wore a look of rapt attention, but in a moment he turned round to Anthony.

"Do you hear it—the sound of them? the funny little whispering faint, blue sound—they are singing about Honor!"

Presently they came to the great sunny hemmed-in space of the walled kitchen garden with its wide generous borders of herbacious flowers, its alleys of fruit trees and its green heart where a sundial kept record of its peaceful hours. At the very end of the centre walk there was a raised rustic gallery or bridge, a vantage place from which to look down on the wide enclosed space with its gorgeous borders. It was, however, past the luncheon hour before they reached this and Anthony diffidently suggested it should wait till the afternoon.

"We must leave something to do," he had said, half laughing at her rueful face.

"Oh, I want to see it all over again with you," she admitted frankly. "I've been ever so rude I fear, all the time, but it's too lovely to talk about. I hope Lawrence has made up."

"We won't call you to account," her host replied; "but we would venture to remark, being merely ordinary folk and not your book people, that we are hungry."

So they returned to the house and luncheon was the gayest and pleasantest of meals. Honor too, forgot her shyness and ceased to worry as to the correctness of her behaviour and Lawrence forgot that his presence was anything but the happy order of things and found courage to ask with a delightful, shy defer-

ence to try the piano he had noticed in the drawing room. After lunch was over Anthony showed him the pile of music he had unearthed and asked him to find out for him if any of it were any good.

"If it's no good it might as well be burnt," said the mendacious Anthony who had no idea of burning it at all, "so I thought I would take advantage of you and get you to look at it, if you don't mind."

Lawrence did not mind—not in the least.

His voice was tremulous with eagerness as he began turning over the music and he instantly became oblivious of them and unaware that they left him to himself. As they passed through the adjoining library the first notes of a Prelude came to them. Honor looked at Anthony and smiled.

"How it alters him—playing," she said. "He never seems to be a boy at all then and isn't he delicious when he's happy?"

"And he's not usually happy?"

She shook her head.

"Andrea does not understand him."

She caught sight of the case of miniatures and her eyes lightened.

"Andrea told me of these, may I see them?" she demanded quickly.

He showed them to her. They compared the style of the faces and chose their favourites. Honor remarked on what had struck him so forcibly on that former evening, viz., the general likeness between women separated by short decades of years from each other.

"Perhaps it's only because they are miniatures," said Honor thoughtfully.

She looked up at him as she spoke, but he was gazing across the room and he caught a sharp vision of her face framed in an old oval French mirror hanging on the opposite wall. Thus framed and hung, it

flashed on his sight as a miniature suddenly grown big. A miniature that was not like these others but contained the something they had not. If one dared to hang it in the case by them there was danger the pretty faces might suffer, might even sink into insignificance—if one should hang it there!

Anthony was aware of a sudden change in things, of a sharp blow struck at his inner consciousness. They finished with the miniatures and went out into the garden. Anthony believed it was Honor who suggested it. He was outwardly quite collected and coherent, but at the back of his mind he felt as if some one had broken a window and he was not certain yet if he were blinded by darkness or by a great light. He knew he wanted to have that miniature there—that one and no other in all the wide world.

At the precise moment when his thoughts had been so forcibly directed towards the duty of marriage, love had stepped up to him and with unfaltering feet and had said: "I am here." His trained, acute mind had the wisdom to recognise the greatness of the discovery and to decline for the moment to reason over it. He knew, indeed, that love is not a matter over which one can reason, that the suitability of the beloved to outward circumstances is a mere accident. To the world outside, Honor might appear only an unformed, not too well educated girl with a pretty passion for imagination, a free and easy upbringing and with a deplorable lack of social *aplomb*, an altogether unsuitable bride for Mr. Bradon, of Wallingford, (F. R. S.). But he was totally oblivious to these things. His concern was rather how he was to induce Honor to listen to him and forget the disparity in their age which loomed so unnecessarily large in his mind. For he knew exactly to what juncture of affairs he was coming. He had not fallen in love with Honor when they were looking at the miniatures, he had only

recognised then that he was in love. It was for this he had longed to show her his possessions; for this he had lingered in England. He had fallen in love with her when he first saw her standing on the back of a chair with a dirty little fluttering ball of feathers in her hand. When she left him to-day the glory of the garden would be gone for him, if he had not compassed her perpetual return to it and all that it meant to him. If he could compass that will which was in him to-day, the case of miniatures would in due time receive the dangerous addition and Lady Lewisham's mandate would be obeyed!

As he walked by Honor's side and talked of simple matters that were so far removed from what was to come, his mind was rapidly assorting such points as he thought might tell in his favour. He could make real for her the world of beauty for which she craved. He could solve forever those petty worries that obscured her vision of it. He could widen her fields of experience that she might fulfil the destiny that he, with simple faith, believed was hers. So certain was he of his power to shield her in this way that he had no compunction as to the bribe he meant to offer her that she might become an integral part of his actual life. So sure was he by the light of that sudden revelation of all she stood for in his own life and of the emptiness that must be his without her, that he weighed up greedily every possible material advantage he could offer her, trusting such might count in his favour instead of time in which he felt so strangely bankrupt. The world might have called him a fool, but his greatest folly lay in undervaluing the two great things he had to offer her—himself and his faith in her.

He made no definite plans. They were not going till the evening and the hours of the afternoon were his in which to crowd what should have been the work of weeks. He was subtly conscious that time

was his enemy and not his friend, and he found no purpose in waiting for some far off chance of securing what he meant to secure if the will of man was competent to do so.

He told her with intention of his work, his ambitions and also of his boyhood and of Andrea, but it was when they spoke of Andrea, his sense of antagonism to time was strongest.

Then with a wisdom born of his love he led her to talk to him again of her work, her wistful hopes and ambitions at once so modest and so loyal. She desired to be the teller of good tales, to tell them well because it was the job she was most fitted to do and loved best to do. Of their effect or influence, or her own future importance as a writer, she thought nothing; she asked no more of life than to be able to write, she feared nothing but those things that might prevent her writing.

But this fear was still edging its way between her and her work, and she told him so.

"I was sure the end was all right when I first finished," she said, knitting her brows, "but now I am not. It looks sometimes as if it ought to end badly but that seems such a pity in a book. Things do that often enough in life."

"Not in yours."

"Oh no! but in other people's—here's Alice and Mr. Timmins," she sighed, "and Lawrence. How could one end that off all right?"

"Lawrence is only at Chapter One; there's plenty of time."

"Yes, but Alice? I can't see any way I could work that out nicely. Lately it seems to me I only come across the things I can't tackle and then I feel I can't go on with the other side of things—my side, love and life of the beautiful sort—unless I could get in touch with it and find it quite real too."

She stopped a moment and looked at him and away again, and spread out her hands with a little helpless gesture.

"You see I am a coward. I'm afraid of finding my beautiful world is not true." He longed to tell her it was true and to prove it once and for all, but the hour had not struck yet for him. It drew nearer and nearer and then he would end such doubts forever for her.

"At the back of my mind," she went on steadily, "I know it's all true and you have helped me again to-day. I knew places like this were real, not because I had read about them, but because they had to be. You have given me visible proof, and that makes for courage."

She turned and faced him with frank wonder.

"Really you have made lots of things visible to me and possible. Types and happenings—things I hoped were possible but only hoped. Now I know."

Her face went suddenly crimson and the calm introspective look vanished.

"Please don't think I have been studying you as material, it would be too hateful of me. It's just the seeing you and—" She could find no way out and only stood looking at him with naive awkwardness and distress.

This childish inability to get out of a verbal difficulty roused a tender amusement in him. He felt no impatience at her lack of dexterity, but rather found it an additional charm calling for his chivalry and support. The excitement and confusion he had first experienced died away and left him quietly confident of his purpose and concentrated in will. The whole trend of his future life now, the very existence of this hidden spring of happiness which he had discovered lay in the hands of this quite inexperienced girl, but to him she would never appear as inexperienced for she stood

for the eternal type of womanhood, whose knowledge is intuition and whose actions are from the promptings of her hidden nature.

"Let us go to the bridge in the enclosed garden," he suggested.

She walked by him silently for a little space for her mind had reverted to the trouble for the past few days and had very really oppressed her—the matter of Alice and the gas man and all that it signified. It was a kind of waking nightmare to her to imagine that Alice should accept Mr. Timmins as a means of escaping the monetary troubles of the family. She told herself times without number that Alice would do no such thing any more than she would, yet her strict regard for truth would not let her lull her conscience to sleep over the matter. The little persistent doubt that fretted at the back of her mind was whether to save Alice from the necessity of taking the gas man into consideration (that was how she invariably put it to herself), it was not her—Honor's—bounden duty to make sacrifice of her inclination and accept that lately repeated offer of more remunerative work on a lower plane.

She made no headlong assertions to herself about it. She did not pretend either that she wanted to do it or that she was sure it was the thing she ought to do, but she very certainly wished to make up her mind once for all on the point. It would have been no use to refer the matter to Andrea. She knew beforehand what his verdict would be. But it did occur to her that Mr. Bradon would be a very dependable, trustworthy judge. She decided she would find courage to refer her difficulty to him before she left.

But she never did.

CHAPTER VIII.

IF THIS BE TRUE.

THE spires of white foxgloves and blue delphiniums stretched up to reach the sky, flaming points of Lychnis and late poppies, the garlands of pink roses trailing down to meet the lillies beneath them and the river of pinks foaming over on to the green turf, all the summer glory of the garden lay spread out before them to the view from the little gallery that ran along the end wall of the big garden. Honor and Anthony stood there watching the last magnificent efforts of the day to do homage to the world it was about to quit. Soon the light would fade and these flower children of the world would sink back into the quiet oblivion of darkness one by one; first the glowing fires of red and orange, then the rich blues; lastly, lingering when all else was gone, the pure white.

But it was still day and through the trees the dull red brick of the old house showed like a protecting duenna.

Honor leaned over the rail and looked down at the garden with blissful content.

"It has all been more wonderful to me than I can ever tell you," she said slowly. "I do not think there can be any place more beautiful."

"There are many," he answered quietly, "but I am glad you should think that." Then he knew the moment was come and that before the sunset had faded away his whole life would be changed one way or another.

"Miss Passfield," he said very steadily and forbearing to look at her because he was frightened.

"Miss Passfield, I want to give you something if you will take it. If you will there will be no happier man alive than I, but you mustn't take it unless it will make you happy too."

She turned puzzled, questioning eyes to him. She had no glimmer of an idea as to what he was trying to say.

"I want to give you all this," he said with a sweep of his hand that took in the garden, the house, the woods. "All that is mine here and elsewhere—and myself too."

She still only looked at him with blank perplexity and he went on hurriedly:

"You have already made it your own kingdom, you know, by your great gift; I am only trying to make it actually yours in plain fact—but I have to include myself in it to do that. It's not generous of me, but I can't help it," he smiled whimsically.

No one, even with double Honor's experience would have known he was holding on to his courage with both hands now the die was actually cast, and she must refuse or accept.

Honor straightened herself and turned to look at the garden again. Then she gave a quick sigh.

"I think," she said in rather a thin low voice, "that I must misunderstand you. Do you mind saying it again?"

"I am asking you to marry me," he answered patiently.

The colour swept up to her face and died down again.

"I think I must have got into a book or else I'm asleep," she said rather unsteadily. "How could you marry me? You are Mr. Bradon of Wallingford and ever such an important personage and I am—just Honor."

"It's just Honor I want in all the world," he told

her and his hand gripped the rail before him tightly.

Mists and veils hanging over her mind and soul seemed to melt and leave her piteously open to the glare of reality that frightened her.

"But you hardly know me—only two or three weeks—and I'm only a writer of stories. Why should you want to marry me? I don't understand it."

"You are just Honor and I seem to have known you for all time and I want all time to know you better. Listen, my dear, please," he went on rapidly and put his hands over hers to ensure her waiting to hear, but he need not have troubled. She was tremulously intent on him, struggling with all her soul, to get at grips with some stupendous happening which had fallen on her out of a serene blue sky.

"Honor," he said, his voice shaking a little with the force that pushed him on and his deep meaning. "Honor, if you will marry me I promise you now, first, before anything, that I will help you to fulfil your own purpose before everything. I will never stand in your way between you and your work. I want to make it easy for you. I want to help you to be all you can be—I give you my word I will help you,—but beside that I want you myself; I want to marry you because I love you more than I can make you understand at present. I know I am much older than you, but, indeed, I should not understand you less for all that. I believe I can make you happy, and that I can help you to what you want if you will let me."

She let her hands rest in his though he had loosed them. She took no step to him, but neither did she step back when he came nearer.

"Dear, I can't say what I want to say like your book people would do, but for all that it's real and quite true that I want to take care of you, make all things possible for you and give you a beautiful world to live in—my dear, I love you so deeply—Honor!"

His voice drew her drooping eyes to him.

"Oh, it's quite real," she whispered with a look of rapt wonder deepening over her face. She in turn came a step nearer him—a step that carried her into her own kingdom.

And neither of them realized that he had never asked her to love him.

When they returned to the house later on they found Lawrence still at the piano, to which he had returned after tea, living in company with Handel and rather inclined to resent interruption.

Honor told him it was time to go and he sighed.

"Isn't there a later train? I'm not half through these yet."

She assured him hastily there was no other train and also that it was not good manners to extend a visit unduly.

"I won't bring you out again if you aren't a good boy," she added severely.

"Will you let him have the music?" suggested Anthony, with a meaning look and smile at the new disposer of his property.

"If he can carry it."

Lawrence looked breathlessly at his host.

"Do you mean for my very own?" he gasped.

The assurance that it was really so meant blinded Lawrence to anything unusual in the demeanour of the two.

"I will come and see your father to-morrow afternoon," said Anthony in a low voice.

Honor gave a start. The unreality of any to-morrow to this last bewildering hour caught her spirit.

"It won't seem a bit real when I go from here," she whispered, looking at him with frightened eyes.

He took her to the window and put the signet ring

he wore on her finger. It would only fit the middle finger of her right hand.

"That's quite wrong I am sure," he said ruefully, "but it is the best I can do till to-morrow to make you remember it is the realest thing in the world and that you can't accept anyone else."

Honor laughed.

"I will try and bear that in mind till to-morrow," she said; then her eyes which had been full of smiles grew grave. "You may wake up and wish it were not real—then you need not come, just send—"

But he stopped her.

"You child!" he said reproachfully. "It's the other way round, for, Honor, I ought to remind you I am old—for you, that is."

Greatly daring, she put out one hand and stroked his sleeve.

"I think we are as old as one another," she said. "Old enough to be very foolish or very wise."

"The wisdom is mine."

"Indeed? Am I so foolish to listen to you?"

"I will make that wisdom. But, Honor—how good it is to say your name—I shall not be able to stay to-morrow for long, I will come the next morning and take you out and make you believe it's real, in earnest."

"Not Friday morning," she protested ruefully. "I promised Andrea to sit for him."

"I will fetch you from Andrea's," he said, on a sudden inspiration that it would be well to let Andrea understand the situation as soon as possible, and he added, with a glance towards Lawrence, who was busily engaged doing up his noble pile of music. "And we will have a motor and go out somewhere. Will you tell him?"

She said "No," she wanted to tell no one till it was "real,"

Here Lawrence, having very inadequately tied up his parcel, turned to them to display it.

"It's most awfully good of you, Mr. Bradon," he said with that shy, sweet smile of his that gave his face its one resemblance to his father's at his best. "Perhaps one day I can play it back to you."

"It's only a little thing, Lawrence. My will stands for much more than we have been able to get yet for you."

Lawrence nodded. He was not prepared to worry over things to come, good or bad, so long as the present was profitable.

Anthony did not drive to the station with them. Honor felt his hand shake in hers as he bade them good-bye.

"It's been the most wonderful day that's ever been invented," she whispered, and the irresistible child in her added mischievously. "That is, if it's real at all!"

Lawrence found her unusually quiet on the way home.

She told her family with earnest conviction that Wallingford was the most beautiful place in the world and that she had enjoyed herself immensely, but that was all. The rest must keep till the morrow.

"It's curious," she said; "I find that Andrea was brought up there a good part of his time. But he isn't a bit like the place. Now Mr. Bradon is just like it."

"I dare say there's plenty of likeness between them if one knew them well," Alice remarked.

Honor, who had been lounging in a chair, sat bolt upright.

"There's not," she said emphatically. "They are not in the very least alike, not in the least."

CHAPTER IX.

[A] MATTER OF CONGRATULATION.

ANDREA found Honor in an unusually good mood for posing on the Friday morning and he took full advantage of it. She was clad for the purpose in a dress of dull blue stuff with silver clasps and her dark hair hung round her face; she sat with her arms resting on the back of a sofa and her head resting on her arms.

Andrea had imagined that he knew every line of her face and every expression, yet to-day something in it baffled him. It seemed as if she had seen some vision before which her brave soul stood awestruck and humble.

Apparently she did not wish to talk and he too was not in the mood for her face with that baffling expression was playing the deuce, he considered, with his conception of things pictorial.

The studio was very silent. He was working with furious energy and now and then he swore softly under his breath, not for fear of offending her, but because he would not over disturb his own efforts.

The picture on which he was engaged was a thing of blue harmonies in his eyes, but Honor had chosen to designate it "Melisande," having lately seen that play and fallen under its spell. Andrea cared nothing for Melisande, but he had cared a great deal for the precise moment in which he had elected to portray the mystical blue lady and it was not the moment which he read in his model's face to-day. That made him a little irritable and angry.

Then she spoke quite abruptly.

"Andrea, I am going to be married."

At that minute he had caught the new inspiration of her face and was working for dear life, therefore he ignored the inner purport of her remark and answered at random.

"Really? Why do these things so suddenly? Don't move, please. I hope he is respectable—no, I don't, for if so he mayn't let you sit for me. You might have waited till this was finished."

But all the time something at the back of his mind was telling him that it was no joking matter, but a grim reality with which he would have to count.

"He's quite respectable and I don't know whether he'll let me sit to you or not."

"We must bribe him."

"You are not properly interested," she declared, with a little tilt of her head that spoiled her pose and tantalized Andrea with a new idea.

"I'm not annoyed anyhow," he returned provokingly.

"Still you may be when you hear who it is! I am going to marry Anthony."

She said the name very slowly and softly as if it were an experiment in sound.

That roused him and he spun round on her with a shout.

"What?"

A dab of paint fell where it was not wanted.

"I thought that would be interesting," she said, quietly. "I suppose you are annoyed now."

"Are you serious?" he demanded, roughly tossing down his palette and lighting a cigarette with fingers that shook a little.

"Yes." After a short pause, she added: "He is coming here to take me out presently, about twelve o'clock."

"Oh, is he?" Andrea, seated on the edge of the table, looked at her curiously. "How did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Bring it off?"

She met his eyes straightly.

"It was he who brought it off. I don't know how, but he did. It is not quite real to me yet."

"I didn't give you credit—" he began in the same brutal way and then got up and walked restlessly down the room and back. "Hang it all, Honor! it's a big thing, but good Lord! what fuss there will be! I shall hear of it from Cousin Laura."

"Because you introduced us? I wonder why you did, Andrea."

He came swiftly across to her, raised her face to his and looked steadily into her eyes.

"Are you in love with him, Honor?"

She drew back from his touch with a certain dignity though she had never before resented his easy ways.

"I don't know in the least," she told him slowly. "I can't imagine anything in the world more—" (she stumbled over her words) "—anything more 'contentful' than being with him always. He's just what I always wanted to believe in and feared to."

"That's a good word 'contentful,'" he muttered, picking up his palette again in the same restless way.

Suddenly he began to laugh weakly and hopelessly, the laughter of a naughty child who finds fun where his elders reprove.

Honor abandoned her pose without ceremony.

"I am glad you are amused," she said coldly. "I quite thought you would be angry."

"There will be people enough to be that," he assured her cheerfully. "Lady Lewisham will never forgive me. This will be the last straw."

"I wonder if you ever succeed in thinking of any one but yourself, Andrea?"

"There are so many people who can think for themselves and practically no one who can think for me."

She had to laugh, it sounded so ridiculous. What was the use of expecting sense from Andrea. One had just to forgive him. She took up her pose again without thinking and he surreptitiously took up a pencil and paper instead of his brushes.

"Anthony is one of those people who are always giving one shocks and then asking what else one expected. I confess now I see it is all very much a matter of course. And seriously, Honor," his voice changed the faintest shade, "he's the best chap in the world. I ought to know."

"Not so well as I do," she insisted, and the look he had been waiting for came back to her face.

"You? Why, you know nothing about him. The worst of it is you'll think he's just an average specimen of a nice man instead of being a unique Don Quixote."

"I don't think him a specimen. I was always sure that people like him existed."

"There, what did I say? 'People like him!'—but they don't exist. He isn't *real*. He's created by people like you who deal all their lives in pretty ideas and invent types to suit them till they actually appear."

"Well, if they are so nice, why complain?"

"I don't. There isn't enough of them for that."

"Well, I did not create your cousin."

"He had a name just now."

"At my option."

"I should have thought it would have been 'Anthony, Anthony, Anthony,' all day." He went on talking rather fast and again at random, using his fingers with feverish haste.

"The only thing that is quite certain is, if you want

my blessing you must come and live in St. John's Wood."

A slow smile quivered round her lips.

"Can you imagine him here? Can you think of him living anywhere where ordinary people live? Why, I could no more write of him here than in a slum."

"That's the falseness of your creed. You meet humanity everywhere, so you ought to be able to write of him everywhere. There's nothing so usual as a man, you know, unless it's a woman," he insisted, oblivious of his former estimate of authors.

"Then why did you take a whole hour the other day to settle a background for this dress?"

Andrea shouted:

"Well scored, Honor! I yield—no, I don't—my art is artificial; yours supposes itself to be natural!"

"Aren't you mixing fiction and journalism?" she suggested.

He chuckled.

"Anthony won't like your writing, you know."

She turned a startled face to him.

"But indeed he will, he said so—it's partly—for that—." She checked herself abruptly, but Andrea had noted her words.

The sketch was practically done so he felt no obligation to reassure her.

"He's an old-fashioned chap, you know; thinks women ought to sit on cushions and sew seams."

She flashed into defiance now.

"He does not, he told me that much."

"That's just wiliness. He hadn't hooked you then."

"Andrea, you are unbearable."

He tossed her the sketch. It was a living representation of her face with all the mystery of the great event showing through it. The magic that could convey in a few lines such deep meaning should have

earned many pardons for its owner, but this time Honor was more angry than she had ever been before.

"You have no right," she cried, and there were tears in her voice and in her eyes; "no right to go about catching people's souls like this."

"I protest. I haven't the slightest use for a soul of my own much less other people's!"

She flung it down and hid her face.

"Sorry, Honor," he said with a little crooked smile. "I didn't mean to hurt you." Such an amazing statement from him made her lift her head. His glance shifted rapidly from her to the sketch.

"I'll paint Anthony a wedding present from it," he said. And at that moment Anthony entered.

It was almost a shock to Anthony to find her talking to Andrea in that familiar commonplace way, also it had not occurred to him that she would be in "fancy dress." She looked lovely enough and she was totally unabashed by her loosened hair, which indeed she twisted up indifferent to either of them. She had stood up at Anthony's entrance but did not go towards him, only held out her hand shyly.

Just for a second the unreality of it all, on which she insisted, caught at Anthony's heart but he dismissed it sternly, and with it the momentary sense of shock. It was here he had first met her and it was Andrea who had brought them together. If she had not been friends with Andrea in just this intimate way he would never have met her.

He wondered what she had said to this responsible friend and looked from her to him questioningly.

Andrea made no attempt to help them out. It amused him far too much to see them manage it for themselves.

"I've told Andrea," said Honor simply, "he seems to think we are both mad, so I begin to believe it's really a sane thing."

"Too sane for him to understand," Anthony told her, looking across at his cousin with kindly eyes. "But, Honor," he lingered a little over the name, "I have got the motor and thought we'd go down to Richmond, or where you like, and I'm afraid you can't motor in that dress, pretty as it is."

"And I don't think Andrea would let me, if I could," she assured him. "It might fade and he ransacked half London for this shade. It's miserable stuff and will fade at a breath of sunshine as I told him."

"Well, your Melisande, or what ever you choose to call my blue lady, lives in the woods and unsunlike places, so no doubt it will last her long enough."

"I won't be more than ten minutes," Honor affirmed, as she slipped away.

"And she won't," Andrea commented meditatively; "she's the quickest change artist I've met. Missed her vocation, I think."

Anthony did not reply. Andrea had his back to him and was putting finishing touches to the sketch. Honor's glove lay on the table and by the sofa was a hairpin. It was borne in upon Anthony that Honor's friendship with his cousin was not a thing that would dwindle away easily. It was a component part of Honor.

"Well," he said at last, addressing the back of Andrea's head. "Aren't you going to congratulate me?"

"I'm not congratulating myself," was Andrea's characteristic reply. "We were a very nice little family party. Why did you come and disturb us?"

"You introduced me."

"I know, more fool I. But I ask you," he turned tragically towards his cousin, "as a man of the world—which you are *not*—could any one have expected it, in the time—even if ever? Set yourself on one side if you can and look at it dispassionately."

"But I don't in the least want to set myself aside," laughed Anthony. "I'm much too contented with myself. Really, why should I mind if it were to be expected or not? Though I should have thought it obvious."

"That you would admire her—yes. I reckoned on that. That you should marry her—no! That was the last thing that occurred to me, blind idiot that I was."

"Does it matter to you, Andrea?"

He was grave enough now, for here was a possibility that had escaped him.

Andrea did not answer immediately. It occurred to him for a moment not to answer at all. Here was a subtle revenge there ready to hand—but it was Anthony, good old Anthony who had always stood by him. He was good to tease but not to torture. So he let himself tease for a moment.

"Caught out of my very hand by a trusted friend!" he murmured with one eye on his visitor.

Anthony took the matter seriously enough, but not so seriously that he was prepared to accept Andrea's ambiguous remark without elucidation.

He went across to him where he sat, still intent on the little sketch, and put his hands on his shoulders.

"Andrea, did you mean—were you hoping to marry her yourself?"

Andrea looked up at him and laughed. Even Anthony did not guess the laugh was a little the result of will.

"Marry? My dear fellow, since when have you taken me for a marrying man? No, Honor's unique as a friend, but I'm not certain she'll retain that uniqueness when she's a married woman. Hence these tears."

He raised his oddly inscrutable eyes to his cousin's.

"You are a villainous thief all the same," he added

lightly; "and as far as Cousin Laura is concerned I disclaim all responsibility."

"She has been pointing out with marked emphasis that it's my duty to marry."

"Not the daughter of a poor devil of a dilettante who hasn't enough brains to know when he makes a fool of himself."

"I'm marrying Honor, not her father, who anyhow appears to me a man who's got on the wrong side of fortune. I am in your debt, Andrea, and I shan't forget it."

"I hope you will," began the other, in tones of pretended alarm, but at that moment Honor appeared.

She wore the identical linen dress she had worn when they first met, and a dust-coloured coat over it. Her cream straw hat was tied with a cream veil which had been a purchase of that morning, and she was a little doubtful now, if she ought not to have a blue one. It was to Andrea she turned for an opinion on the doubtful point when she entered.

Andrea regarded her critically, Anthony saw no detail whatever. To him she was just an expression of herself in whatever dress she wore and he asked nothing better.

"Yes, very good," declared Andrea, with a faint proprietary air. "Stop at Marshall's and get her some *Allen Richardson* roses, Anthony. It's all right but it doesn't lead anywhere."

Honor laughed at Anthony's comical look of bewilderment.

"He's alluding to my dress, he thinks it wants colour. Really he knows a lot about such things, you know."

"It leads to your face and that's enough for me."

"Still, I'd like the roses."

"Of course, you shall have as many as you like."

Honor gave a little sigh of content. Fancy having

as many flowers as one wanted instead of mere penny-worths at a pinch.

They started to go but half way downstairs Honor turned, and ran back to the studio. Andrea was painting again rather savagely.

"Andrea," she said, and there was a suspicion of faltering in her voice; "we've always been friends and understood each other. Are you angry with me because I've promised to marry him? Is it such a dreadful thing for him?"

He made a last effort to withstand her pleading tones.

"Good heavens! Considering that I have no room for a conscience of my own, do you suppose I can keep yours?"

"Socially—is it so dreadful?" she insisted. "And you have never wished me happiness."

He shook off his temper and took her hands.

"My dear child, if I growl it's because I am jealous that any one can make you look like that. I've wasted time. Don't let him shut the cage door, though."

He bent suddenly and kissed her on the cheek.

"I bless you, my children!—it's all right, we are nearly cousins, you know," he added lightly; "it's I who ought to give you away, not Aubrey."

She ran back to Anthony satisfied.

Andrea's temper resumed its sway over him, however, when he was alone again. He worked savagely, flinging great streaks of paint on the background with a queer defiance of method and rule, though once there they contrived to look as he wanted them to look.

Lawrence came in presently to tell him it was lunch time, and he shortly commanded him to sit for him.

Since Honor chose to put a new complexion on what she was pleased to call the Melisande picture, a Pelleas might be of use.

The fact that Lawrence was hungry and not a little

sad that he had missed Honor, and that he had been practising for three hours in his attic on end, combined to give him a decidedly wistful appearance that suited Andrea's wants and he forgot time and Honor's affairs for the moment. However, as the tide of his energy turned, he picked up his sense of grievance where he had dropped it and proceeded according to established usage, to work it off on the unfortunate Lawrence.

"Who do you think is going to be married?" he remarked, with purposeful carelessness.

Lawrence was uninterested and his father, sure by the boy's unconcern that he knew nothing, continued:

"Prepare yourself for a shock. You know so little of the faithless sex. It's Honor."

Lawrence sprang up.

"Now don't get excited," Andrea complained. "I've not quite finished. Yes, it's Honor. Do you feel it deeply? Bear up—you are young and women faithless, but the world goes on. I fear I can't back you up in any intention of calling out the villainous 'he,' because it happens to be my dear coustm. How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a usurping 'cousin!' You are to blame, you know; what were you about on Wednesday to give them the opportunity?"

"Is it true? or are you only rotting me?" demanded Lawrence. His face was very white and his eyes black and shadowless.

"No, it's honour bright. She's been smart to catch him whom so many matrons in the fashionable world would have given their eyes to secure for encumbering daughters. Jolly wise thing on her part. I didn't think she was so 'cute.'"

"Stop that!" cried Lawrence, in a strangled voice. He was panting slightly and his hands were clenched. Passion stood bare on his face.

"Can't bear it? Too hard hit? What about me?"

"I'm glad—glad," cried the boy with a fierce sorrow that swept fear before it. "Glad even if it means she never comes here again. It puts her out of your power, you can't hurt her now, he'll take care of that. I've always known she shouldn't be here, that she belonged to different things—far above us."

He dropped his head on his hands with a little suppressed sob.

"Yes, quite admirable," remarked Andrea drily; "only I've drawn you like that before. I want your face now."

Lawrence sat bolt upright. He had no courage to resist his father on his own account.

"That's rather an unexpected way of taking it," went on Andrea, in his even, pleasant voice. "I thought if you were not heartbroken yourself you would be overwhelming me with reproaches for not having secured for you so admirable a stepmother. Steady, steady, it's such bad form to exaggerate even expression." He drawled wearily over the words. "I fear you'll never learn what is good form and what's not, Lawrence. We shall find Honor growing more enlightened in these matters. Do you think she will bow to us from her carriage, Lawrence?"

Lawrence reached the limit of his endurance and springing up, rushed away to his own fastness.

He flung himself on his bed crying in a spasmodic way again and again:

"I am glad, glad, glad!"

But Andrea thrust his picture face to the wall, made some hurried preparations and went away for two days.

On the third day, Lawrence, coming into the studio, found him there at work again and quite cheerful.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. BRADON.

HONOR was married to Anthony Bradon at the end of July, exactly two months after her first introduction to him.

Andrea did not give her away, but he took a prominent part in all arrangements pertaining to the wedding. He even induced Lady Lewisham to attend the ceremony. At the first news of Anthony's preposterous engagement she had taken to her bed, a victim to acute self-condemnation. "Why had she ever interfered?" was her fierce wail. "Why had she not known that it was courting disaster to indicate to any Bradon the way he should go?" It had been Andrea who roused her to a more lenient view of matters. He disarmed wrath by assuming the rôle of a humbled criminal. He was to blame, and after all, he told her, mournfully, he suffered most from his own rashness. Lady Lewisham, watching out of the corner of her sharp little eyes, did not entirely disbelieve him, and eventually bestirred herself at least to enjoy the spectacle of seeing Andrea behave himself in a difficult corner. So she came to the wedding was very gracious to Honor and listened with interest to Andrea's surprising information about the guests.

These were not many from the standpoint of a fashionable wedding, but they comprised such friends as the Passfields had, regardless of position or presentableness. The collective view of the Passfield family as to Honor's remarkable achievement was mainly one of reflected glory. They were proud of her, at the same time they considered it was no more

than her deserts. If she were a lucky girl, they were quite assured Anthony Bradon was an equally lucky man, and they severally and jointly assured him of the fact in their different ways. Alice said least. Mr. Timmins at this time retired into the background of life and though hope was irreducible in his honest breast, he had the good sense to see it was no propitious time to press his own wooing.

Mr. Passfield wandered about the house in a melancholy way, telling every one who would listen to him that he could not conceive what the place would be like without Honor, though of course, it was not to be expected they could keep her forever. Sara and the twins, and even Wilfred, secretly consoled themselves with thoughts of future advantages. They expressed their approval to Honor of her choice after deliberate consideration, and Prudence even went so far as to acknowledge that after all "Anthony" was good-looking.

To Honor herself, those days of hasty preparation were a dream. They were real enough when she was with Anthony, for Anthony was a most substantially real person, but when she was alone in familiar surroundings she had some difficulty to persuade herself she was not actually visioning a remarkable chapter in a book rather than participating in actual sober facts. Perhaps the family as a whole were a little too inclined to treat it all as a matter of high romance, and herself as a heroine playing a proper part in life. Certainly the actuality of the event never gripped her away from Anthony, except in Andrea's company. Before his little gibes her whole soul rose to defend the position. It did her no harm that she saw a great deal of Andrea these few days before the wedding. He designed not only her wedding dress but all those other gowns which she was to take with her into the new life. Also he designed the bridesmaids' dresses

with her. Sara and Prudence were to be bridesmaids and Honor and Andrea had their patience very sorely tried to reconcile the two girls' differences on the ideas of dress.

They were to go to Wallingford after the wedding. The tenant declared it was his offer that had precipitated events and perhaps he was right. Wallingford for two months was the programme and then Guardini, and the round of ordinary life again; Anthony's ordinary life, that is.

"You can finish your book there," Anthony told her as they planned the future.

A shadow of anxiety flickered across her face.

"I'm not quite certain I shan't begin a new one instead," she said, thoughtfully. "I've never felt quite satisfied over it, but I'll have to write one soon. I've promised Silverman."

She had not the least intention of misleading him, but that promise had taken the form of a signed agreement in return for a cheque which had made those beautiful dress designs of Andrea's possible, and it was Andrea who stood surety for her in case of failure. She had treated it as a joke and to all appearance he had done the same. It certainly never occurred to her to mention such business details to Anthony.

"You will order your life as you like," he assured her. "I only claim the two months at Wallingford for my own."

"But you won't mind my thinking about it?" she enquired earnestly.

"Couldn't you not think about it just for that little time?"

She was sitting on the grass at his feet scorning the empty chair meant for her. The very earnest note in his voice made her turn and look up at him.

"I haven't forgotten what I promised," he said

gently. "I won't ever stand between you and your work, but just that two months I want you to live only in a real world, not a dream world, to live every minute of it. I am afraid afterwards I shall never expect to keep you wholly from dreams and I mustn't because you've got to make my idea of you come true, and I shall be proud if I can help you."

There was a half shy trouble in her eyes. She was still at times shy with him, never more so now than when he spoke of her writing and the future.

"It would be a dreadful thing to disappoint you," she said, a little wistfully.

He leaned suddenly forward and drew her head back so that it rested against his arm. For the first time she was reminded of Andrea. There was something of Andrea's quick instinctive actions in the way he did it.

"There is no disappointment, only fulfilment," he told her firmly; "even if I proved wrong, which I shall not do, you will fulfil yourself and it will be good."

She promised him with seriousness the two months empty of dreaming at Wallingford.

He had innumerable arrangements to make for his prolonged holiday, and did not see her again till the great day.

The wedding took place at the unfashionable hour of one o'clock, with a luncheon after it. Honor spent most of the morning decorating the house with Lawrence's help. Lawrence had been like a shadow to her the last few days. It was characteristic of the Passfields that no one in the least resented it.

The ceremony was over at last, Alice helped Honor into the frock Andrea had selected for her to go away in and followed her downstairs, praying secretly that no one would speak to her. She did not afterwards

realise that it was Mr. Timmins who, with simple tact, had prevented that untoward occurrence.

Lawrence placed himself at the door where he could see Honor to the last.

"You promised I should come to you," he whispered, and she nodded and then kissed him as she had done her brothers.

But Andrea was the last to take her hand when she was actually in the carriage. He looked at Anthony across her.

"If he is horrid and shuts the door," he said; "come back to me, Honor. My door is always open."

"Silly Andrea," she returned. Her voice was kind but she slipped her hand under Anthony's. "Why, he has opened the door for me!"

And that is how Honor Passfield became Mrs. Bradon.

PART II.



CHAPTER I.

AT GUARDINI.

THE Villa Guardini clung to the side of the mountain with grim tenacity, in ever seeming danger of losing its hold and sliding down into the green waters of the little lake that lay so far below it, silent and unfathomable, in eternal shadow, save where the gorge opened out into the world of sunshine waiting for it and tempting it to placid shallows, fringed with marsh reeds and mossy meadows. Up in the heart of the gorge one could hear, if one listened and had learnt to distinguish the voices of the Great Silence, the ceaseless splutter of a waterfall slipping from rock to rock, in haste to reach those still waters below, that in the days of their youth were so much nearer the mountain top than now. The sides of the gorge were covered with ilex, cypress and firs, and on the opposite side to the villa, an almost impenetrable undergrowth hid the rock which on the western side showed bare and sun-blistered between the laurels and roses, and creeping plants. These plants and age, together, had so clothed and disguised the work of man that the engrafted walls seemed to melt imperceptibly into rock below that point where the yellow plaster still forced a semblance of youth on the wrinkled stones. There the villa hung like some immortal beauty holding on to life and from the ceinture of narrow terrace that encircled her down to the very lake where she dipped her feet, fell her beautiful robes of green, fold upon fold, slope upon slope, embroidered with stately cypress, tangled roses, arbutus and flowering shrubs, with patches of flaming gem-like beds of lilies and

scarlet-blossomed creepers, trailing like a hanging girdle about her.

From out of the deep-barred windows, one saw nothing, or little, of these decorated robes unless immediately above the narrow terrace. One saw instead a wide world, sometimes clear with an aching clarity, sometimes veiled and mysterious with a golden haze, or phantom-like in a white mist as a lost dreamer, or on the great darkness of moonless nights, an empty void crowned with a faint luminous glow out to the west, where the mother city of the plain lay. In daylight when the sharp clearness prevailed, the dim outline of her buildings just showed where earth met heaven, a measure for space.

The precipitous and circuitous road that approached the villa round the curving shoulder of the mountain first skirted two little red brick terraces, one slightly higher than the other, where vines draped themselves over the brick pillars and formed a trellis of green enamel against the *lapis lazuli* of the sky. Then with a sharp turn the road passed the walled-in entrance court and wound on down the steep hill to the comparatively commonplace country that lay between Volesta and Brescia. One really saw very little of the villa at all from the road. Its yellow walls were almost windowless on this side, it was not till one passed it and caught a glimpse of things it had hidden from the road that one wondered what might be seen from the windows and balconies of the Villa. The first of the two terraces that marked the northward boundary of the place was about fourteen feet square, and was formed out of the mountain itself. The second, which was some two feet lower and many feet wider both ways, was merely a *terrazza* formed on the roof of the rooms pertaining to Anchora and his two daughters, who comprised the staff of the villa.

It was the little top terrace that formed Honor's

favourite resting place when she was alone. She could never quite accustom herself to the precipitous outlook from the balcony outside her own rooms, but from here she could view the whole irregular outline of the place, standing clear against the empty space that brooded over the Great Plain and gain a less precipitous view of the sloping garden's winding walks. From here too, if she chose to turn her back on the beauty spread out for her, she could catch a glimpse of Agostino, the goatherd, coming back from the bare heights with his goats; of old Mardellena knitting as she went with slow steps, and of various *bambini* at different stages of dirt, impertinence, brownness and charm. There were not many passers-by, but what there were she could see if she chose.

Yet this was by no means the most beautiful spot at her disposal. Honor would lean back in her long chair during the hot hours of the day and close her eyes, to see those other places where, with so little exertion she could sit, if it so pleased her. There was the cool entrance court with its orange trees in tubs and its blue lilies; the formal south terrace with its wide spacious stone seats, its fish pond and its restrained patches of colour, and grey balustrades over which one gazed on to that sumptuous skirt of garden down to the green lake itself. Or she could take visionary glances from her own balcony and look back up the gorge to where the waterfall showed like torn lace between the trees; or she might mentally measure from the windows of the vaulted, bare dining room the immensity of the Great Plain that lay between them and Milan.

Never in her most delirious dreams had she visioned anything so wildly beautiful and impossibly romantic as the Villa Guardini. She used to ponder deeply over what possible reason could have induced Andrea to sell it.

For the villa had been Andrea's. It was his mother's property, and for some years in his early career he had lived here on and off. And then one summer he sold it to his cousin.

Anthony had not bought it because it was beautiful, Honor was perfectly aware of that. If it had been ugly as the prison at Brescia, he would still have hankered after it had it been in the market. Nevertheless he appreciated its charms and entertained an almost superstitious respect for it, adding nothing, and touching nothing but that south terrace which he restored from modern ruin under Andrea's directions. He, however, had never so rejoiced in its glory as he did when he saw Honor's first breathless wonder over it, and watched the spirit of the place lay a spell of dumbness on her soul. He read no danger there, for the spell of it was not on him. To Anthony, Wallingford was his real home, and it was at Wallingford he wished Honor to reign; meanwhile, since his work drove him here he was glad it was worthy of her.

So one day when he had just joined her on the little upper terrace, she said to him:

"It's much easier to live at Wallingford than here, Anthony," he was glad, because it meant a new link between them.

"Only a year or two more and we'll be there for good, I hope."

"How long have you been here exactly?" she asked.

"Six years. I was staying here with Andrea when I got hold of my idea. The *pellagra* was raging that year, I remember, and it seemed such a stupid waste of life and such hopeless misery. I couldn't see the Lombrosa theory did enough to stop it. The first two years I worked on those lines, the 'mouldy maize' idea, you know, and it was then I found the serum which is certainly useful sometimes, but it was no

use worrying over a cure if I could find a preventive."

"And then you got your own idea?"

"I had it from the first, but it seemed right to understand the Lombroso theory first."

"And no one will support your theory?"

He laughed.

"I have to bring some proof first. They'll support it then. One can't hurry with scientific proofs, you know, it's all desperately intricate. I should be further on this year, only it's been such an exceptionally—lucky one for *them*—the people; hardly a new case at all. It's awkward for me that they should have set up the factory for drying maize only last season."

She nodded:

"I see; it looks as if it were due to that."

"Yes. When are you going to begin your book, Honor?"

A little shade of dissatisfaction crossed her face.

"I've tried," she admitted reluctantly, "but I can't start."

"Well, it's been rather a tempting season to be lazy."

"*You* work."

"I'm used to it all. Besides, it's different. Mine's mechanical, to a large extent; watching and measuring, and comparing, and feeding microbes and larvae."

"And taking notes. Anthony, oughtn't you to have a safe for those note books of yours? Suppose there was a fire."

"What an awful idea! My poor little larvae would all be burnt. But you are right, Honor. I'll get a safe next time I'm in England. Dear, I'm glad you like Wallingford best."

"Hush! don't say that aloud here, or you'll hurt its feelings."

"Whose feelings?"

"The spirit of the place," she whispered, with mock

awe, and then spread out her hands, saying aloud: "This is the most beautiful place in the world."

And instantly she blushed and looked askance at him.

After nearly a year of married life, Honor retained a certain quaint awe of her husband, or rather it had deepened here in this place, consecrated to his work. His absorption in his purpose did not distress her, but she had a glimmering notion of the greatness of that purpose and in proportion as she grew to admire her husband, her shy respect for him deepened. His care, his thought, his worshipful homage of her never varied—only increased—but his expression of it was stilled, or partly stilled, by the very fact of her too willing subjection to his half-spoken wishes. Moreover, it took a great deal more to move him to expression than it did Andrea. Neither of them, however, were really conscious of any creeping shadow between them. The only cause for uneasiness on Honor's part concerned that unfulfilled agreement with Silverman. That was such a surely mounting uneasiness that she was by no means anxious to continue the subject of her book on this particular afternoon, when her mind was haunted by some words in a letter she had received that morning:

"You'll find Guardini a glorious place to laze in, but no good to people who have to work for their living as I had. It takes a St. Anthony to resist its charms."

Anthony had laughed at this and so had she at the time, but it continued to return to her memory with disagreeable insistence. It was a great deal more pleasant to make Anthony discuss his work.

"When you've got all your proofs what will happen, Anthony?"

"I shall have to put my proofs before those it concerns, and get a Commission formed. With luck, one

more season here ought to do it," he added ruminatively. "And at all events, when I leave, I hope *Pellagra* will be in a fair way to lift its head in vain against these children of the earth. They are such children, you know," he went on, with a little burst of confidence, "just like children who look at you when they are ill with such dumb reproach that you don't do something for them, and when they are well, forget they are ever ill and bring you their little jokes and toys."

"And expect you to laugh at the one and mend the other. Yes, I know, and they bring flowers too, Anthony. The last week I have found a bunch here on the wall beside my chair each day and Anchora declares he doesn't put them there—besides, they are mountain flowers."

"They love you, Honor."

"And I cannot even talk Italian yet," she cried with tragic despair. "Isn't it awful to be so stupid. I try so hard too!"

She was so seriously tragic that there was a suspicion of tears in her grey eyes.

"Am I really stupid about it, Anthony?"

It was a great pity he did not let himself follow his impulse and kiss her. Most certainly at that time Anthony left undone many things it would have been wiser to do. Andrea would never have made such mistakes.

"Language is a gift like music or writing, or anything else. You can't monopolise them all, my dear," he told her consolingly.

"I can't write, either." She spoke so low that he hardly heard her, but only felt she was troubled over something.

"It's cooler now. Will you come for a walk?" he suggested.

She agreed with the readiness with which she agreed

to anything he proposed, though he was only just beginning to see that.

"Up the hill to the sunset?"

She made an effort and pulled her will together.

"No, down the hill to the village. I want something that is not all—too beautiful, so that—"

She stopped confusedly.

"Finish your sentence, untidy one," he commanded laughing.

"Well, so that I can appreciate this better. It's really too lovely, you know."

She went to get a suitable hat, and he pondered over her words uneasily. He did not find Guardini too beautiful himself. But then he was very terribly aware of ugly evil things lurking behind the face of nature; aware of a sullen earth that brought forth unclean progeny, aware of sickness, inertia, misery, death. To a man whose days were spent in alternately cultivating and destroying the germs of insidious disease, the outside face of things can hardly be too beautiful to save him from revolt against the great careless mother.

When he saw Honor reappear, he went to meet her and stopped her a moment. He made a little clumsy pretence to straighten her hat, and then said:

"Honor, my dear, are you quite sure you are happy here?"

Honor caught his hand in hers.

"Happy? I should be worse than ungrateful if I were less than gloriously content and happy."

She bent her head swiftly and kissed his hand; that unfortunately prevented him seeing her eyes. It was truly unfortunate, because there was something in them that was not gratitude, and it came over him with a flash that the last thing he wanted of her was gratitude.

They went down the steep road into the little village of Volestra with its oddly irregular groups of houses in more or less bad repair. There was beauty enough

though, even there, if one looked for it behind the undeniable dirt and dilapidation—physical beauty in the brown eyed babies, in the lithe figures of the free stepping girls; moral beauty too, such as pertained to primitive man. It only needed seeking. Honor did not trouble to look for it. She liked it all just as it was, on the surface, untidy and dirty, but still as she expressed it, "going on."

They encountered a grey-haired, mournful-eyed priest who saluted them with courteous cordiality. He had a companion with him, a priest of a different type, a man with a narrow, straightened face and compressed lips whose greeting bordered on the frigid. The older man's was undeniably troubled as he looked after them.

"That's the new priest, I suppose," said Anthony, when they were out of earshot. It's a great pity for me that Father Ambrose is going. He's a tremendously advanced man and has always backed me up."

"Need one be very advanced to do that?" she asked, with gentle scorn.

He looked down on her with rather an amused little smile.

"There are still a great many people in the world who do not believe in interfering with what they are pleased to call the 'visitation of God.'"

"Oh!" She gave an indignant gasp.

"If the new man is like that I shall get no patients in the hospital, you see."

"But it's to cure them?" She was plainly incredulous.

"They have only my word for it and I am not orthodox, even scientifically."

"What has that to do with it?" She became half an inch taller.

"I might be the devil. What would our own country people do if an Italian quack doctor came and settled

amongst them and professed to cure them of rheumatism?"

"Go to him like a shot if he charged nothing."

"Cynicism from an idealist!"

"I'm not an idealist. Would it really delay your work, Anthony?"

"If the people here were antagonistic? Yes."

At this moment a woman holding a child by the hand passed them. She was on Anthony's side of the road and she crossed over and passed on Honor's side with a stealthy, appealing glance at her as she went.

Honor gave her "Buon giorno" in bad Italian.

"Her husband died of pellagra last year," Anthony said, regretfully. "They would not let me see him till it was too late. Hullo, Beniti!"

A small, dark, vivacious man stopped them, speaking in voluble dialect. Anthony listened and nodded and seemed interested. Presently he turned to Honor.

"Would you mind waiting in the church, or going on slowly back alone?" he asked, apologetically. "I want to go and see a man."

"Can't I come?"

Anthony hesitated.

"I think perhaps you had better not. It's Mario, he's just out of prison. I did not know his time was up."

"What had he done?"

"Quarreled with some one and killed him—Oh! it was not a planned thing, just an accident. He is a very good sort, is Mario, you will like him, but I would rather you waited, one never knows when they come in from towns—"

He looked a little troubled.

"I think I don't mind waiting to be introduced," she assured him gravely; "it's a pleasure that will keep."

"Oh, he's all right as a man—I was thinking of infection."

"Then I'll walk as far as Pietro's farm and turn back."

Honor continued her way down the village which seemed to her to-day more populous at the other end, or the women to have more leisure. They came and stood in their doorways and, if it had not been so preposterous, she would have thought they crossed the road for the sole purpose of accosting her. The children, too, were allowed more liberty and not recalled with such rebuking shrieks as usual. Honor smiled at them all and used her poor few words of Italian over and over again. She was tremendously interested in the "children of the earth" as Anthony had called them. They seemed to her as dumb witnesses of things, simple and true, things really terribly and beautifully real; just by watching and moving amongst them she felt she was arriving at a new understanding of life and it filled her with joy. Once a woman came up and began to speak swiftly and torrentially. Honor distinguished the word *pellagra* several times, and making wild guesses at the gestures of the clever hands, nodded her agreement that the dreaded scourge was in a fair way to be swept away. As she turned to retrace her steps she heard the distant hum of a descending motor and the women swept up their children and retired into their houses. Honor kept to the side of the road; it was not very wide and the turn above her was sharp. The motor was coming at a great pace, she was surprised how rapidly it did approach. Suddenly, a baby, a persistent wanderer from a cottage nearer the Villa, appeared toddling with lordly unconcern down the middle of the road. Before Honor could call out the motor swept round the corner, tardily blowing a musical horn, arresting the ignorant baby attention. The car swung round, squirmed and groaned at the sharply applied brakes; the baby was caught from before its very wheels by a

blue-clad apparition and the car recovering its equilibrium, stopped. The owner stood up and shouted something, possibly an enquiry, probably a curse, and was answered by an indignant fiery protest in an outrageous language. The driver decided no one was hurt and went on.

Honor stood holding the unhurt child in her arms, her face was white and her eyes fierce, and she looked after the car with an expression that boded ill for its future, if such were in her hands. The women crept up to her diffidently, nearer and nearer and one went on her knees in the dusty road; others reached out shaking hands to touch her dress, some told their beads, all were very quiet and awestruck. The child, recovering from its fright, soon stopped crying, and made snatches at the ribbon round her neck, bursting into chuckles of delight. With rather impatient pity at the women's apparently paralytic fright, Honor turned and went up the hill, still carrying the child; the women followed at a little distance and now they whispered to each other and to heaven.

Round the bend of the road they met Anthony. He saw Honor with the dirty, fat, half-clad baby in her arms and the women behind.

"What is it? Are you hurt?" he called and hastened to her.

"No one is hurt but they might have been," she answered, her unspent anger still colouring her voice. "That car nearly—nearly killed this *bambino*." She had got that word early into her head, but as she said it, she looked down at the dirty little face and her voice shook.

Anthony would have taken the child from her, but she declined to allow it because the baby was so dusty.

"No, I'll take it home to Nina, I've done that three times already, and told her she shouldn't let it run about like this, alone."

"Told her in English or Italian?"

Honor laughed unsteadily.

"Your dress is all torn," he said sharply, with fearful enlightenment.

Honor looked down at it.

"The motor, I suppose; I was only just in time—brutes!"

He walked silently beside her. He had no words for anything lower than heaven for a few moments, not here at any rate.

The news seemed to outrun their steps, for others—men and women—met them and also followed, and again Anthony was aware of low whispered phrases and looks of adoration cast at his treasure, and wondered.

The door of the cottage where the baby lived was open, inside some one was singing.

Honor pushed forward and stepped in, Anthony remained outside and listened. The singing was supplanted by a piercing cry and voluble speech from two voices mingling with each other. As far as he could disentangle them the meaning was something like this.

"It's criminal to have a baby and not look after it, specially when it's so pretty. I'd like to summons you but I suppose one can't in this stupid country. Why don't you have a board made for the door so that he can't get out? Oh, I've no patience. I don't care how many children you have had or have buried, if that's what you are saying—you don't deserve any!"

And in answer, in a sort of *sotto voce* accompaniment:

"Holy Mother and all the blessed saints!—that the excellent lady should visit me. And the bambino safe. Yes, yes, I swear by our Mother Herself, Angelo shall be given to the priest so soon as he can talk. I will give the excellent lady my golden beads, they are real—not glass ones like Agatha's. Oh, I did well to call

him Angelo, who is loved of angels! What honour is mine. Now Calama can flout me no more as to her clean doorstep, she, who has no little feet in and out to bring the dirt!"

Honor and the mother finished their respective says together and the former came out quickly and put her hand in Anthony's.

"I can't help being angry," she said shakily; "and when I am angry I feel—giddy and queer—take me home, Anthony!"

CHAPTER II.

THE SUGGESTION.

"No, I am not surprised, I expected it."

"I don't believe it."

"Very well, my child, don't. Admit you have tried?"

"I mean I don't believe you had expected it."

"How can you tell what I expect or not? The point, however, is to convince Silverman that you've tried and are no good; why bother about it? I am quite willing to pay up."

"I could pay up myself. You know it's not that." Oh, Andrea, don't be so horrid. I thought you would help me."

"Help you write a book? Heaven forbid!"

"No, no. Help me understand what's the matter with me that I can't write."

"That's Anthony's business, not mine."

Honor took out a fresh sock from the basket at her feet and proceeded to cut out the so-called darn of Bettina.

"I can't think how he ever bore it," she sighed, "the socks must have seemed shorter and shorter every week."

Andrea leaned forward in his chair.

"I'll help you understand if you like," he said with an odd note in his voice. "It's all that," with a wave of his hand which included the whole of the distant landscape, the garden, and the villa; "and this combined—" he drew the sock from her hand—"this chiefly."

She maintained her hold of the sock.

"That's absurd, I used to mend your socks."

"Not here—and only when it happened to be convenient, not as a duty."

"Now it is a duty."

"Very well then, explain that to Silverman and tell him your bargain is off and let me pay up."

"I can't—and again, I don't want you to pay."

"Then write," he returned provokingly.

Honor continued her darning.

"I like looking after Anthony," she said after a pause. There was a suspicion of defiance in her voice."

"So it appears. Perhaps it's a bit stiff on Anthony."

"What do you mean again?"

"I imagine from all you told me that he did not marry you in order that you might darn his socks—even Anthony is not quite such a fool as to expect that of—a genius—it just happens that domestic virtues are thrown in with the bargain."

Honor lay down her work and stared at him.

"I wish I understood you."

"Since when have you found me so obscure?" he retorted mournfully, and rising and going to the edge of the parapet. After a moment's silence he called to her, "Do you know, Honor, for all it looks so sheer down there, you can't fling a stone into that lake?"

She came and leant over beside him.

They were on the little stone balcony outside Honor's own particular domain, which was the second story from the top entrance to this erratic building. The ground below sloped sharply away in a narrow ravine that went down straight to the lake. It was crossed half way down by a stone bridge and flanked with aspiring cypress trees—the ravine itself was a cascade of tangled roses hemmed in between low brick walls—beyond the cypress trees were mimosas.

"It would make a lovely waterchute," he murmured.

"Barbarian!"

He shook his head.

THE DOMINANT PASSION

"It's too pretty, you know, to exist outside Academy picture. It's really not decent, that beauty, *en plein air*."

He looked at her oddly out of the corner of his eye.

He was still consumed with curiosity to learn whether she had changed or not, and as to what score he marked up against Anthony, who had looted, as he put it, his best possession.

"I can't believe you seriously troubled as to whether it's decent or not," she remarked with defiant scorn. "You misjudge me as ever. I am consumed with fear at this moment that Venus Aphrodite will appear on that bridge as a finishing touch and I should have to go."

"To get your sketch book? Don't be silly, Andrea—if you can help it. Besides, I really want to understand."

"You take my breath away, I can't jump back as fast as that."

"You have jumped—what did you mean? Please, Andrea?"

She put her hand on his arm in precisely the old familiar manner and it pleased him in a manner that was not familiar.

"I meant that Anthony believed he was marrying a genius, and I wondered if he preferred mended socks to foolish novels."

"They are not foolish," she protested, "but more foolish than other people's."

"Only they do not happen to be written by me."

"They will be."

"I am glad to hear it, even though it is a false prophet."

Andrea was a self-invited guest, but his presence had been very sincere. There had been no pleasure on Honor's face, or the ease with which

picked up, the threads of their dropped friendship; rather it would seem to her that it had never been dropped, even in the eight months that had elapsed since they last met.

Against the pleasure he on his part derived, he set the heartwhole interest and evident half shy deference she betrayed in Anthony. It fretted him just a little to take such an obviously second place in her interest. This being so, he was entertained in puzzling at the slightly wistful look that was apparent in Anthony's eyes when he was not speaking. He should have nothing left to wish for, as he so evidently held the game in his own hands.

Anthony was pleased too, to have him. He appreciated, as Honor could not, the difficulties of maintaining good terms with the new priest, and various small worries with the Italian government, which was becoming curious about his little hospital. "They need not worry though," Anthony told him drily, "We hardly get any patients now, only cases so bad that they would sell their souls for relief, poor things!"

"I see you've still got Leonello in tow."

Leonello was Anthony's assistant experimenter and had charge over the hospital, with two attendants under him.

"He's absolutely dependable."

"Ugh!" said Andrea, with a little shiver. "It's one of the reasons why I got to hate the place—Pellagra. It's a sickening sight and I never have the grit not to look at it. But why should you spend your time here worrying over them when they aren't your fellow-countrymen is more than I can understand. Why don't you go to Wallingford and let Honor write?"

Anthony laughed.

"So I will when I have finished my job. But pen and ink are as cheap here as at Wallingford."

The other glanced at him quizzically. Did he know

of Honor's difficulties or did he not? Andrea would have given a great deal to know that himself.

They were in the laboratory which was on the first or entrance floor of the Villa and where Anthony and his faithful assistant, Leonello Bachi, experimented with mouldy maize, with queer larvæ and flies, with toxins and serums, and strange-cultured growths. The big table that occupied the end of the long, narrow room was stacked with note books and papers in methodical array. Even Leonello never ventured to disturb its ordered neatness. Still, as Honor had once said, there should have been a safe, only where would it go? Every inch of available room seemed already allotted. The place fascinated Andrea, with its spotless cleanliness, its glass shelves, its rows of odd-shaped bottles and trays and tanks, and the bare crude light from the uncurtained windows, and at night the still harsher light from high-powered electric lamps. Anthony did not encourage visitors there, even Honor seldom crossed the threshold, but Andrea had his own way of going just where he wished to go. He liked too, to talk to Leonello in his mother tongue, and to rouse his usual impenetrability by covert little attacks on the folly of his chief's craze.

"He's only a quack, you know, Leonello," he would say; "and I thought you a better patriot than to run counter to the discoveries of our great compatriot."

All the same he had never heard the name of Lombrosa till Anthony had taught it him.

But Leonello would flare up and declare science knew no country.

He asked him once, with rather marked carelessness, what the villagers thought of Mrs. Bradon, and the quick intelligent glance he got told him that Leonello knew at least as much as he did of the curious regard in which the English signora was held.

Still he pressed for an answer.

"It has been a favourable year since she came here," was all he could elicit from him.

"So they take her for a new patron saint?" he persisted.

Leonello said he knew nothing of saints, he was not orthodox.

Andrea pretended to be shocked and went off down to the salon which was Honor's particular domain and where tea was served English fashion. Honor made it herself, Anchora never learnt the art.

This salon ran nearly the whole length of the Villa, and was on the second floor down from the entrance. Honor's other rooms opened out of it. It was itself a spacious, bare room with little furniture, and what there was, was old Italian and of priceless value. To English eyes it might appear formal and comfortless, but the only alteration that Honor made in it was to add a long shelf for books, and even these looked queerly incongruous, though that did not distress her. Andrea found her there now, seated before the open window which led on to the *Loggia* or balcony, which ran round the outside of this floor of the house.

He told her Anthony had gone up to the hospital.

"I draw the line there," he said. "The laboratory is all right, but the hospital—Ugh!"

"If every one shirked ugly things as you do," she told him placidly, "the world would soon have no beauty left in it at all."

"And no saints! How grateful you should be that I afford them opportunities. There's no point in my seeing ugly things. I only want to obliterate them. It's people like Anthony who want to cure them. I don't mind them either when they stand for something, but if Anthony's going to do away with pellagra it's not even a lasting thing, so why look at it?"

She regarded him thoughtfully.

"That's one of the truest things I've ever heard you say."

"I could say truer things than that, if I were pressed."

"Don't try. The smaller your capital the more you should save it up."

He felt too indolent to protest. Moreover, his attention was really given to the room. He was glad it was so little altered. Except for that bookshelf of which he had already bitterly complained, it was all as he left it seven years ago. The walls were still bare of pictures except at the end where hung the one big picture he had sold to Anthony with the Villa. And he often wished he had not done so. He had arranged and decorated the room especially for it, and the main reason for which he had parted with it was that he did not believe it would look so well anywhere else. It was a good picture and he admired it very profoundly as he drank his tea.

Presently, when Anthony came in, Honor showed him a necklace of gold beads.

"I found it on the wall beside my chair this morning," she said. "I am almost certain it is Nina's, I've seen her wearing it. Would she be hurt if I returned it?"

It was Andrea who answered her.

"Don't return it whatever you do. She would not sleep o' nights thinking you mortally offended, and Angelo in peril, and then it would be all up with your saintship."

"With what?" she demanded, amazed.

Andrea only laughed and looked at Anthony.

"If she will do these silly things, rescuing babies when there are too many already—"

"Nina didn't think there were too many," Anthony interposed lightly, with a little smile. "You must keep it, I think, Honor."

"If it would teach her to look after her babies——"
Andrea interposed.

"It's no use. A presiding saint is better than a shrill motor horn, or even than anti-toxin. A fig for your maize factories and flies, Anthony, the remedy is nearer at hand."

"It's the remedy for many evils," said Anthony.

Andrea decided that whatever Leonello might know, his cousin knew nothing. He decided that it was not his business to enlighten him further.

That evening as they were seated on the loggia after dinner, Dr. Picardo, the district doctor, descended on them with a fervent request for Anthony's presence at a distant cottage.

The sick man had been living on the prepared maize for over a year; he had premonitory warnings in the early spring, but had disregarded them, and had just come under the Doctor's hands. Dr. Picardo was an advanced disciple of Anthony and had promised him the next case procurable. Whatever he thought of Mr. Bradon's theory of first cause, he had profound respect for the serum of allivitation which was so costly and difficult to prepare.

"It may be a false alarm, but it sounds all right," explained Anthony to Honor. "He is willing to let my stuff have a fair chance before trying anything else." Honor went up to the entrance court to see them start. The doctor went out to his horse and Anthony went to the laboratory to fetch his precious preparation.

Honor, who waited for him, drew him out of the lane of light that streamed out of the open door.

"Will you really be able to make him well, if it's pellagra?" she asked. She could give no reason for her question, or her desire to retain him.

"It's not so sure as that yet, but if it's really a new case, it may, stop it."

She slipped her hand into his.

"It's so wonderful! I don't think I properly understood before how wonderful." She whispered, "Oh, my dear! what a big thing it is, and how silly and small it seems to worry about books and pictures and such things beside it."

Anthony took her face between his hands and raised it.

"My dear, everything has its place," he told her. "I am only trying to do something for people's bodies. Don't forget that books and pictures sometimes do something for people's souls."

He kissed her and bade her keep Andrea amused.

Honor pushed the bunch of roses she wore into his hands.

"They love flowers; give them to him."

She rejoined Andrea a minute or two later with a troubled look in her eyes and he laid wait for the explanation of it, trapped it out of her and was undetected and was not ashamed.

"Do you think, Andrea, that any one in the world was ever really influenced—I mean just made happy and comfortable, or made to do something by a picture or book?" They had moved by common consent into the salon.

"That sounds very involved; let me think it out. Do you mean your books and my pictures in particular?"

"Any book, any picture."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can say? There are a great many fools in the world, need we bother about them?"

"You think they may really exist?"

"Persistence is a vice that is growing on you, Honor."

"You think it?"

He clutched his hair in mock despair.

"My dear child, I've heard of such, but for heaven's sake, what have they to do with us? We don't write books nor paint pictures to help them, the saints for-fend!"

"Yes, of course we don't; but it gives a reason, it's not *us* but it's what we are *for*."

He gave her a swift covering glance. Honor had written nothing since her marriage yet he was aware that she had a wider outlook, a new conception of the possibilities that were in her. She would have laughed at being coupled with him in aim and purpose a year ago.

"Well, I have no desire to be of use to any one but myself," he admitted frankly; "and I don't think Silverman has any idea of your utility beyond his own pocket."

She began walking to and fro in the empty room, passing in and out of the bars of lamp-light, her shadow growing and shrinking on the bare creamy walls, and Andrea knew that, if Anthony were here, she would not have paced up and down like this in mere surrender of her mood, she would have caged it in and sat still. He blessed the doctor and his patient.

She was wearing a purple dress of soft, filmy stuff. He approved it much—against the wall with the light falling in slanting shafts it was good. She was so tremendously alive, the very material that clad her seemed to take on her vitality—he never found just that quality anywhere else—there was a subtle magic in her restlessness contrasted with the empty peace of the room, he might have planned it all for this very moment—to see her moving across it from shadow to light. How empty of suggestion London had been all these colourless months!

She stopped before him. The vague anger in her

eyes gave him keen pleasure; it did not matter against whom it was directed, so long as he could see it and rejoice in the vitality it denoted.

"Well, the book has got to be written, so it's no use talking nonsense about it any more."

He shook his head.

"You won't be able to write it except in London, and as that's impossible, you had better let Silverman know and take my cheque."

The little mocking ring in his voice drew on him just the impatient, scornful glance he expected. No, Honor was not changed! He hugged the knowledge to himself.

"I shall write here, and at once. I wish you would go away to-morrow, so that I could begin."

"I'll obliterate myself," he protested meekly.

"It will be for the first time in your life then."

Then she broke into laughter and her anger died out.

"Let us make name-bogies. I'll get a quill pen from Anthony's room and heaps of paper."

So they bent their heads together over the ridiculous game and covered slips of paper with signatures in heavy ink, which being folded, made weird and intricate shapes. Honor was very jealous because Andrea's signature made such a much better bogey than hers did.

She said no more about writing nor did he. Indeed, he seemed anxious to erase his remarks from her mind, so persistently did he avoid the subject.

He left two days later and at the very last his good resolutions—if he had made any—failed him.

"I'll buy the place back from you some day, Anthony, when I don't want to paint any more," he said, as he bade them good-bye. Honor heard as he meant her to do, but was provokingly unconcerned.

"Good-bye," he said to her. "I'm glad Guardina has a presiding genius at last."

She heard that and flushed red to the tips of her ears.

"And it requires a real genius—to do nothing," he added softly, for her alone. "That's why *I* am going back to work-a-day London."

CHAPTER III.

A SACRIFICE TO GENIUS.

DURING the hot summer months Anthony entreated Honor to find some friend and to go up further into the mountains, or to cooler regions; he could not himself afford time to be out of touch with certain experiments that were going on. But Honor would not hear of it. The heat did not seem to trouble her, moreover, she told him she was writing. They made short excursions to different districts where government investigations into the nature of *pellagra* were going on, and once Anthony travelled down to Roumania and back. In their own immediate neighborhood the singular dearth of new cases continued into the autumn. The one authentic case of the man he had visited, and treated under the supervision of the district doctor, recovered. It was considered by the patient and his friends as a miracle and a bunch of withered flowers was hung up in the little church. Anthony had left a minute empty glass tube behind him one day by mistake, but that did not occupy a place beside the flowers.

Honor, unlike Andrea, avoided the laboratory. She did not like the look of those narrow tanks and trays, where myriads of little flies were hatched out for the purpose of wholesale destruction, as it seemed to her. She took, however, to visiting the hospital and several long-standing cases, and some younger ones presented themselves for treatment. Their sufferings, if not cured, were almost always alleviated. The demand for the serum became a great tax on Anthony's time. It was expensive and difficult to prepare, and at present

he could not even trust Leonello with the whole work. He had vastly improved it, but as he had told Honor it was for prevention not cure he worked and he grudged the time those cases filched from him. He had at last begun to arrange and sift out his material. The quantity of it and the minuteness of the recorded facts staggered Honor, who had never come face to face before with the exactitude of science. Her interest in her husband's work increased daily, and it led her to increase her maternal care for him since she found no way to express homage but by means of material things. The agreement with Silverman was nearer fulfilment by a worthless synopsis, two chapters, and a heap of ashes.

They heard nothing of Andrea for some weeks after he left them. Then one morning Anthony received a letter which ended in a polite enquiry into the progress of Honor's new book.

"How is it getting on, Honor?" asked Anthony, "and when are you going to read it to me?" I shall be of far more use as an audience than as a critic of construction."

This was in reference to a futile attempt that Honor had made soon after Andrea had left, to "talk over" with Anthony the genesis of the book. He proved himself quite incapable of taking the amazing leaps and constructing the dizzy bridges necessary to follow Honor's chaotic premises. He wanted to understand details as they went on whereas, as she told him, she had not begun to understand them herself.

She told him uneasily now that there was not enough to read yet.

"Is it going more easily?" he demanded anxiously.

She nodded. She could not lie to him openly. As it was she bit her lip and flushed over the slight deceit.

"I suppose nothing any good is ever easy work," he remarked encouragingly. "I never realised before

what it did mean—creating a book. Think how often we read and dismiss them with such scant courtesy! I have thought a good deal over the little you did tell me. It's such a splendid idea, Honor! That dominant family and the racial instinct! Only you move in such tremendously aristocratic circles, you know."

Honor allowed herself to smile and gave him more tea.

"Not now," she said. "I've altered all that and made them just ordinary people like myself."

His face brightened perceptibly.

"I am glad. I think it will appeal to more. I want it to mean a lot, Honor—this book."

She looked at him questioningly. There was something wistful in his eyes. She had noticed it before, but never quite fathomed it.

"To mean I haven't hindered you, haven't been an obstruction, instead of a help as I wanted to be."

Andrea's words came back to her sharply. She got up with a little gasp, and said she would go and work then and there, while the mood was on her.

When dinner-time came, she sent him a message to the purpose that if he did not mind, she would rather not have dinner, so he dined alone forlornly and tried to drag consolation from the thought that now she was really at work he must expect this, though, of course, for her health's sake it must not become a habit.

The dining room with its vaulted roof and little island of light over the table appeared very empty, yet nine months ago the Villa had not known her name. A year ago and he had not known it either.

A little torturing thought at the back of his mind hinted that in those early days of their first meetings he had been nearer to understanding her than now. He tried to work the problem of it out in his logical mind, while he was, so to speak, away from her. It was impossible that he could be jealous of her work for it

was that which had first brought them together. He was as anxious for her success now as he had ever been and as sure of it. He thought of that two months at Wallingford, and he thought of it as a man might think of a vision of Paradise that would certainly return, but which was incompatible with this work-a-day life of other ambitions at Guardini. If she could only work in it and be happy in her work, he thought, but thought wrongly, he would be very content.

Then it occurred to him he had been selfish, he had expected her to write and yet to be at his beck and call whenever he wanted her and that was in every minute of leisure he could claim from his own work. He had failed in his first promise to her and grew hot with shame at the thought of it. It was like her not to have reminded him. She chose to live under the preposterous delusion that she owed him gratitude. Gratitude for what? A few material things, a little allowance of pounds, shillings and pence! It was his only complaint of her, that she insisted on being grateful.

Once she had written a book under the new conditions he was certain all would be well. It was just the difficulty of adjustment that lay on her and on his side—the selfishness of a broken agreement! That could all be remedied.

That was the best his logical but ill-suited mind could make of a subject so foreign to it.

After dinner he went out on the loggia and there she came to him when the light was trailing her wings over the Great Lombardy Plain.

Away westward, a slit in the sky showed a fiery orange world behind the gathering dusk. Eastward, faint stars hung out lamps above the mountain tops and the voice of the waterfall took possession of the silence.

He had sent her a message to say where he was

and found her with him before he thought it had reached her.

She came swiftly, tremulously, as one at grip with fluttering courage.

"Anthony," she said and stopped breathlessly.

Though he could not see her face he knew there was trouble there and got off the parapet where he was sitting.

"Anthony, I nearly lied to you to-day. I did—really. My book is not getting on at all. I burned all but two chapters yesterday. I can't write. It's all there in my head crying to be put down and I can't do it."

She flung out her hands helplessly, the sense of bewildering wrong that possessed her filled her voice keen with agony of uncomprehended things.

"It was laziness at first, I think. Then it seemed silly to write about lovely things when they were there ready to be looked at—and to feel! It's not only the place, Anthony, try and believe that! Then at last I found I had something to say—I have now. I want to say it so much that it hurts—hurts horribly not to—. And I've tried and tried, and I can't."

He felt it would be far more bearable if she would cry, but he knew she was far from that, that her eyes were dry and aching and her mind strained to tension point. He wanted to hold her and melt her trouble in the warmth of his love for her—and found there was a barrier between them.

"I've been going over it the last two days, hour after hour. And to-day, ever since I left you—I was not writing. I was trying to see what I had to do, and it's just this, Anthony; If I have got to write the book, as I feel I must, I must go back to London to my old life—that's the only way for me."

She was shaking now and her eyes looked frightened, her hands too—when he took them in his—were cold

as stones, but not colder than his heart with unnamed dread.

"Dear!" he said steadily, though he had to speak slowly to hold control of his voice.

"Don't be so frightened. You are not going to hurt me, are you, by saying you're afraid of me, and surely we needn't fear anything we've got to do. Let's talk it over quietly."

But as he spoke he felt that cold chill mount, moment by moment to his heart and he had to fight fiercely that it might not spread out to meet the shadow that lay across hers.

"To talk quietly," she repeated mechanically. "To think whether I am to leave you and go away and write a mere story, or stay here, and watch you work, and be with you and want nothing more in all the world, Anthony!"

What more did either of them want? He caught at the idea with fierce relief. If it were true he would hold her there close to him and nothing in the world should come between them—if that were true for her as for him.

She felt his grasp tighten and he pressed his face to hers, but he said nothing for the moment, the very fierceness of the hope checked him. Was it quite true? Did she and would she want nothing else? Did he want nothing else for her? What of his promise? The promise, by which he believed in all simplicity, he had won her?

Then she scattered the hope to atoms.

"What frightens me is this," she whispered. "I never wanted to write a book as I want to write this one. The need to do it is stronger than my own will. It's got hold of me. It's never been difficult like this before."

Her voice broke plaintively and his hold on her loosened bit by bit.

It was not the time to think of himself, only of her. She had come to him for help and he must give it. That was the first consideration. He made her—and himself, though, she did not know what it cost him—walk to the end of the balcony and back two or three times, and he pointed out the new-born stars hanging over the great space and how one star brighter than the rest twinkled at its own reflection in the still waters far below them. He showed her the night and made her listen to its drowsy voice, till something of calm came to her. But all the time his mind fought with the issue that he knew he must make for her. He had the poor consolation that she had come to him to make it and the knowledge she would abide by his decision. He must make the best of that. If he could have been granted time, pushed the decision off by hours—but even that alleviation was denied him. He knew she had come to him in the extremity of her trouble and that it must be answered. Time would serve no purpose. To let her go was to admit he had caged her, fettered the one soul he had had the supreme audacity to believe he could set free! His own soul was humbled to the dust by the thought.

“We mustn’t lose our sense of proportion, dear. Everything’s got its value and place and the world’s big enough for all. It looks so from here, doesn’t it? Look at it hung in the night.” So he spoke to her.

He had promised he would never stand between her and her self-fulfilment. Was he less sure of that fulfilment now than when he had married her? He knew he was a hundred times more sure of it and that tonight, at least, she in the innermost secret of her being was sure of it too. So he thought.

“Why were you afraid? Hadn’t I promised you

what you loved best in your life should come first? Don't you know I want you to—to succeed?"

He made no miscalculation over the issue between them, he knew that it was no question of ordinary encouragement would meet the case. The point as to whether she were literally right or wrong in her idea also had no place with him. He knew her to be superior to petty fancies of time and place and her difficulties to be genuine. From what source they rose he did not want to see, he instinctively knew he would find no help in the knowledge. But he did recognise with cruel, cold clarity that, if this passion for creation which was hers was going to produce something worth its pangs, she could only return to him when she had made this birthright of hers the servant of her soul and not its master, or there could be no rest between them, and he knew to how few of the world's creators, big or little, is that mastery given.

Still she must go. Had he not told himself, only a short hour ago that it was rank selfishness on his part to stand between her and her work? Worse, it was keeping false faith.

That settled it. It was impossible to be false to his word, cost what it would. Yet he felt it was a strange voice and a stranger to himself who told her this as they stood there together in the darkness.

"You must go, dear," said this stranger (Anthony hated him), "if that's how it is with you. Go back and write your book. It's your first duty; I promised you to consider it so. Perhaps when it's finished we can go back to Wallingford."

She put her head down on his shoulder then and cried with relief.

"I won't disappoint you, Anthony, indeed I won't."
It was the voice of a child and the cry of a child,

and the cold chill crept back and clutched at his heart again.

"As long as you are yourself you won't disappoint me, child," he whispered, and felt the stab of his own words.

"And all this trouble over a silly story," she said presently with a shaky little laugh. "It seems ridiculous—if it were something big now—"

"We haven't got to measure our own jobs, we've got to do them," he told her through shut teeth. "No doubt we'd all like to build cathedrals but some of us have to build brick walls, and they are useful."

They discussed dates and arrangements. He was practical and calm now, outwardly, and she—though still a little frightened and disposed to lean on him morally—took a sort of rueful amusement in the trouble involved. She agreed there was no immediate hurry; the trip they had planned into Transylvania could still come off. So long as the future was secure she had no objection to enjoying the present. She spoke cheerfully of returning to Italy in the late autumn and he did not contradict her.

It was not till the end she thought of telling him of the agreement with Silverman and the advance he had made to her.

It amazed him that an unfulfilled agreement should not have produced a crisis long before. He could hardly grasp how little it mattered to her. She had been willing to do her best, but most assuredly she would not have broken away from her life with him for the purpose of fulfilling those stupid terms.

"But they had paid you the money?"

"I could have refunded it," she said indifferently.

"Andrea was surety for me so they were safe. If I had not happened to have a story to write they couldn't have had one could they?"

"Why did you ask Andrea to be surety?"

There was an odd catch in his voice she had never heard before. Nor he either, for that matter.

"Who else could have been so well? I couldn't ask you before we were married and I didn't know you were going to be so generous and good to me."

He stopped her almost fiercely.

"Try and understand I am nothing of the sort, Honor,—and you will not need Andrea as surety any more!"

"Of course, not now."

She raised her eyes to him with a little smile: "I've got you, you are a much safer one."

Anthony bent his head and kissed her hands with humble contrition. Presently he sent her in to bed, telling her the night air was bad for her.

But he himself stayed out in it.

In the garden below the dense masses of the cypress trees showed like terrestrial clouds against the lighter shades of the garden. Once the eye was attuned to darkness shapes and forms were discernible there.

The stars grew very bright indeed as the night grew older and then faded imperceptibly, but still Anthony sat there on the balcony looking into the dark emptiness alone. Dragging his thoughts away from the past, struggling to hold them from the future and to pin them fast to the present and its needs.

In the end he was vanquished. The thoughts he tried to deny had their way.

"She was too young—she did not know what she was doing. I took advantage of her youth. Suppose she learns that now, when she's away from me? Learns she was too young? Will she ever come back? Should I even dare to call her? Honor, Honor, don't go—I need you!"

He gripped the edge of the parapet before him and laid his head on his arms.

The night grew very dark and very still. In the villa behind him no one moved. Anthony was not at all given to examining his own soul, but to-night it seemed revealed to him as the soul of the most selfish man in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

IN spite of Andrea's reiterated remarks as to the superiority of London over Guardini as a working centre, he had been extremely idle after Honor and Anthony had left for Italy. He began no new work and finished what he had in hand in a perfunctory way. This meant an invaluable holiday for Lawrence, who surreptitiously arranged to take music lessons from a certain forgotten celebrity whose talent and eccentricities had not been sufficiently marked to get a hold over the public, but who was very well able to recognise greater possibilities in his pupil. It was Anthony who had brought such an arrangement within the reach of Lawrence, to whom he had presented before he left London, two five pound notes, with instructions to use them for his musical needs and to let him know when he wanted more. It seemed a vast fortune to Lawrence who had hitherto supported private life on such odd shillings as Andrea tossed him, or as he could contrive to save out of their careless, improvident housekeeping. There were a hundred little ways in which Lawrence could, and did, cheat his father for his own advantage, for the housekeeping, such as it was, was entirely in his hands. Also he paid bills for Andrea who took little heed of their total nor of the change rendered him. It was deplorably bad for Lawrence and tended to erase altogether the very faint germs of monetary integrity with which nature had endowed him. In the old days Honor would call him to account if she found this out, but though Lawrence protested contrition and

remembered her admonitions for perhaps a week, he thought secretly it was just part of Honor's extraordinary "goodness," which the rest of the world could only afford to admire. There was no Honor now, and money was necessary for existence. It was useless asking Andrea for any, hence Lawrence financed himself. Andrea, indeed, did not trouble himself over Lawrence's financial affairs at all. He occasionally suspected him of cheating him over change, but he set against that fact the more convenient one that he was seldom bothered for money and that the expenses of his establishment in Abbey Road were considerably smaller since he had handed over the house affairs to Lawrence. That these expenses bore quite an absurd proportion to Andrea's private expenditure never entered Lawrence's head. When Andrea had not got a working fit on, he came and went at will, lived a great deal at his club, as far as Lawrence knew, and found no reason to deny himself any indulgence he desired. Occasionally he would treat Lawrence to dinner at some restaurant or would wire to him to make a third or fourth at a sudden party. Lawrence liked these adventuresome evenings, though he tried to believe it was only a grudging admiration he bestowed on his casual, brilliant father on such occasions. He would watch him furtively and note the deference paid him by the men and something that was not deference at all paid him by the women.

They were very amusing, these ladies he met; beautifully dressed and witty, and they talked very kindly to him, but he remained always a little shy with them, a fact over which Andrea was rather fond of teasing him. He was generally introduced with a careless: "Here's Lawrence, he cares only for music, but he will look after you, or I shall look after him!"

Lawrence did look after his allotted partner. He had charming manners. The charm was his own, the

manners Andrea saw to. It was the only point in his son's education over which he troubled himself.

Perhaps it was just as well for Lawrence that these gay happenings were not frequent, and he really liked far better the still more occasional dinners with his father, when Andrea, bored by circumstances or moved by careless kindness, took him out to dine *tout seul*, and afterwards, perhaps to see some great dancer or on an exciting hunt for a possible model, in queer, fantastic places of which Lawrence would dream at night. After Honor's marriage, however, Andrea seemed for a time to forget Lawrence's existence except as a convenience for interviewing annoying agents or undesirable visitors. It was during these days Lawrence had taken one of his precious five pound notes to M. Bertini, saying simply: "Teach me as much as you can for that."

Bertini was honest. He needed money and was glad of the note, but he gave Lawrence good measure for it. Lawrence offered him no explanations of his own difficulties. If he failed to turn up at a lesson he merely said next time that it could not be helped and Bertini, seeing his white face and tired eyes, ceased to scold and took no toll for his own wasted hours. But this was after Andrea's return from Italy when he fell to work with an almost savage ferocity and Lawrence was often too weary and stiff with long posing and his own fretted will to perform his promise of steady practice to his master. Bertini knew him, however, for an industrious pupil, knew also he had something under his hand that might mean great things. Lawrence had just that equality of talent apart from his genius that, in "sympathetic" hands, might have been forced into the production of an "infant prodigy" but which—thanks to circumstances (for which he had no other cause to be thankful) were being allowed time to develop into strong, mature

perfection. Bertini snubbed Lawrence's satisfaction with his own progress, laid plans for the future and said nothing about further fees. The inevitable conflict between Andrea's requirements and Lawrence's private arrangements began soon after the former's return to England.

He was using Lawrence for a picture destined for the *Salon* and the pose was a particularly trying one.

The morning sitting was nearly over and Lawrence was wearily calculating how many minutes he could devote to practice before the afternoon lesson when Andrea said:

"Don't change, Lawrence, I can go on again directly after lunch. I can use you for the left hand figure; Dishart is getting fat—and you've improved, you have rather more muscle."

"But I can't be here this afternoon," stammered Lawrence, with sudden cold at his heart.

Bertini had asked some one to hear him and to discuss an exam. It was a question of some importance to Lawrence.

Andrea did not apparently hear or at all events he took no notice.

"I've got to go to Bertini for a lesson at three o'clock."

Andrea looked up. The lines on Lawrence's face stiffened and his eyes shone dangerously.

"Sorry to disappoint Bertini—whoever he is," drawled Andrea.

"He's my music-master—it's a lesson."

Andrea selected another brush. His voice was very soft and gentle and the momentary fighting light died out of Lawrence's eyes.

"Yes? And how do you get money to pay for music lessons, Lawrence? Have you been selling any old sketches of mine again?"

This was in allusion to the one great crime Law-

rence had committed in past days. It was the only occasion when Andrea had laid a hand upon him and neither punishment nor crime had ever been repeated.

He flushed hotly now but he did not answer his father.

"My curiosity is insatiable, Lawrence. Is it sketches or only wages?"

"It was money of my own; Mr. Bradon gave it to me before he left, to buy music or what I liked." There was sullen defiance in his voice.

Andrea strolled over to the table to hunt for his cigarette case. He was angry, very angry, but what he chiefly wished was to widen the point at issue between them, to save future misunderstandings.

He spoke in his usual, casual, easy way without in the least raising his voice and against their will Lawrence's eyes followed his movements and still more against their will Lawrence's ears took in his words and meaning.

"You are right enough, as a general rule, to get whatever you can out of people. I am sure you exercise the right—you are not such a fool as I make you look in pictures, Lawrence! But understand once for all—" He found his case and proceeded to light a cigarette as he turned to the boy and his eyes flickered ominously behind the tiny light.

"—Understand I will not have you take anything else from Anthony—not a sou, you have no claim on him and you've had enough. Have you got any left?"

And Lawrence, mindful of that one rustling bank note safely hidden upstairs, stared at his father and said without a tremor:

"No, nothing!"

At half past three Andrea told Lawrence he had done with him for that afternoon, and Lawrence might have reaped some satisfaction from the fact, had he

known it, that Andrea had done, in his own estimation, a thoroughly unsatisfactory day's work.

It was too late for Bertini, besides he had not done more than two hours' practice in the last twenty-four. It was impossible to practise now, he was far too stiff and weary; too tired, indeed, to be greatly troubled over M. Bertini's feelings, and the missed opportunity.

Andrea would want tea in about an hour's time and there was a weak, miserable pleasure in deciding it didn't matter to him in the least. He intended to forget it, but habit, or some queer little spark of pride in his own responsibilities carried him into the kitchen on his way out to bid Fortuna to have tea ready whenever the bell rang.

Then he went out. He imagined, as far as he was able to imagine anything connectedly, that he was going to Bertini's to explain, but he awoke out of a misty confusion of miserable thoughts to find himself half way to Kilburn.

Kilburn! where there was no Honor! In spite of his sixteen and a half years, tears pricked his eyes as he came to a standstill to grapple with this thought.

She had not written for some weeks. If his father had heard he had neglected to mention it and Lawrence never asked him. Probably Alice Passfield might have news. None of the Passfields came to the studio now, but Lawrence was always a welcome visitor at Number 10.

He went on, therefore, and to comfort himself pretended that Honor walked by his side, listening to his troubles, scolding him too, a little, and there was one thing he wanted to confess to her that he could not put into words even in imagination.

Meanwhile, once Lawrence had gone, 'Andrea fell to seriously considering his bad work.

He pushed the big easel into fresh light and seat-

ing himself on the edge of the stage, fell to examining it critically.

It was his fashion to paint either in colours that glowed like fire through the canvas or in deep monotone. This was a study in shadowy browns with one startlingly vivid face arresting the eyes and obliterating all further curiosity as to the subject of the picture. It was a face that lived—a horrified, bewildered face, seeing something unseen by others, realising some tremendous truth that shattered a life of dreams. So might Saul of Tarsus have looked on that memorable journey to Damascus.

Andrea sat there and looked at it intently; not with the interest of the creator, but in a detached, unbiased sort of way. He wanted to understand what it was exactly he was putting down there on canvas. Sometimes, conscious understanding mattered to him, sometimes it didn't! For the five years in which Honor had been a constant visitor at the studio it had mattered very little indeed. Now his brain rather than his instinct had to grapple with strange things.

"It would require more than a moderate big shock to call that look up in the average individual's face," decided Andrea. "Something more than the mere blaze of lightning, for example."

It was then he first consciously thought of Saul of Tarsus.

He was rather vague about the story. Also he disliked extremely the idea of a "picture subject," but there was something wrong with this picture. It did not go far enough, not right back behind things as he meant it to do. The account might help him spot the weak place. He wondered if Lawrence had a prayer book or bible, and then recollected he had bought a New Testament when he was painting the "Marriage in Cana," and that it must be lying about somewhere. After a considerable hunt he unearthed

it under a pile of magazines belonging to Lawrence.

He found the place with considerable difficulty after abusing the whole University Press as fools for not understanding the value of an index.

It did not take long to read when found.

"Did it help or didn't it?"

He went back to his contemplation of the picture.

How would a man look if all the foundations of his life were suddenly swept from beneath his feet? If, in one flash, his good became evil and his evil good? Honor would know—and he would know without all this trouble if she were by him!

The stillness in the studio was complete, the room indeed was non-existent for him.

He sat there immovably with all his artistic soul straining at the leash, waiting for the complete vision towards which his material self was groping step by step. There were little beads of perspiration on his forehead, and those fine, thin hands of his were rigidly still.

Suppose—so his thoughts sought for form—suppose he—Andrea Bradon—learned in one awful flash that he couldn't paint, that he never had been able to paint, had never had any conception of line, colour, form—that his pictures were the worst of pot-boilers—that if he cared for the mistress to which he had given his life and his soul he must abjure all he had done, take lessons of X—from the beginning of things?

"That's all sheer rank blasphemy, of course," he said between clenched teeth; "but it helps."

Suddenly he sprang up and caught at his brushes and palette. He had it now—the very thing that was wrong.

He began to paint.

Nothing else existed for him in that hour but his vision, Lawrence, Honor, his own personality were all wiped out of his mind. He was conscious only of

"the recollection of some stupendous revelation."

Downstairs they waited for the bell to ring in vain.

The evening came on, the light in the big studio became dull rather than dim. Still he painted.

"God! Let the light last," he muttered in a frenzy of accomplishment again and again.

He was painting as for dear life, setting down his own soul on canvas behind the fine drawn outline of Lawrence's face. The whole thing was first obliterated, born again, then grew. The light was going.

"Just five minutes more," he prayed, and did not know he had ever prayed in his life.

Outside the clouds which had hung over the earth all day lightened, lifted and withdrew, and left a clear still sky for the coming night. The dullness was lifted from the studio. He was given the light he craved.

It faded at last and Andrea flung down his palette and stretched his arms.

"That's all right! It was a narrow shave though, I'd never have done it to-morrow."

He lit a cigarette with fingers that were not so steady as usual, and stood regarding his work calmly, though it was hardly visible.

"I'm glad I'm not Saul of Tarsus," said Andrea Bradon thoughtfully.

Lawrence arrived at St. Jude's Road before he had finished his imaginary interview with Honor. As he opened the gate that no longer led to her presence, the visionary Honor disappeared.

Prudence was coming down the drive with a big roll of paper under her arm and stopped to converse.

"You'll find Alice in," she told him. "It's Mr. Timmins's afternoon but he has not come yet. I am going to meet Amy Grant, we were at the Life School this morning together and we are going to get a model

for ourselves. Couldn't you give us the address of some? You must know lots."

Lawrence protested with fervour that he knew none and no addresses that would be the slightest use to them.

"They cost a lot," he added bitterly.

"And artists are always hard up," lamented Prudence. "I have just one and sixpence halfpenny to get along on till I hear from Honor. I wish she'd ask me out there; it sounds a jolly paintable place."

Lawrence began to hesitate. Should he go in on the chance of Alice being communicative or should he not?

Prudence prattled on.

"What is Mr. Bradon doing now, Lawrence? Has he got anything big on hand? and oh, Lawrence!" she dropped her voice, and came nearer; "you couldn't get me one day just a little bit of madder, could you? even if you scraped it off his palette? I do so want some and I can't afford it."

She was plaintively beseeching, but Lawrence was afraid he couldn't oblige.

"I should have thought he was just the kind of man to squeeze out heaps more than he'd ever use," she sighed regretfully.

"I never touch his palette—only brushes," Lawrence explained; "and I don't even know what colour it is, red, blue or green!"

"Why, it's red—rose madder. How odd of you!" She stared at him with amazed eyes.

"I hate painting and artists and everything about it," he broke out bluntly and fiercely. "I'm sorry, Prudence, but it's true!"

"It's not very polite of you," Prudence looked very offended.

Lawrence was instantly covered with confusion.

He had not mentally included her in his wholesale condemnation of the artistic world.

"Well, if you won't you won't. Good-bye—I say, Lawrence, I did do well at the Life this morning, Pro. said so."

She went on her way perfectly happy in her firmly established belief in the supreme sublimity of the "Artistic Life." If any one had told her that three years later she would marry the manager of a wholesale carpet store and henceforth chain her artistic sensibilities to the saleable value of carpet designs, and the construction of pinafores, she would have laughed them to scorn.

Blessed be the shortsightedness of the young!

Alice received Lawrence in the hall and ushered him straight into the drawing room, but Lawrence knew the ways of the house.

"Oh, but I say," he stammered rather confusedly; "I don't want to—to—"

"To be in the way? You won't be. No one would be." Alice's voice was rather bitter. "Have you had tea, Lawrence?"

He considered a moment and said he thought not.

Alice examined him sharply.

"You look very seedy," she said in her blunt way.

"Are you practising too much?"

Fortunately for Lawrence she went off to fetch the tea without waiting for an answer.

Times were decidedly easier at Number 10 St. Jude's Road, since Honor's marriage. The gas man had ceased to be a bugbear and shoes a nightmare to the housekeeper. But Alice refused to increase the staff.

"I should have nothing to do," she protested. "You can have two servants when I marry—if I do."

For Mr. Timmins was still "courting" and Alice's mind still wavering.

The weight of gas bills being removed from the

scale the balance hung far from equally. She would not confess to herself, much less to Mr. Timmins that Honor's marriage was now the chief "per contra" in the scale.

"It is all just like one of her own books," Alice thought; "so they do come true sometimes."

For all that Mr. Timmins remained entirely unlike one of Honor's books.

She did not wait her tardy suitor's arrival to-day, but gave Lawrence tea—Tuesday and Friday's tea, in the drawing room—and asked no questions though she saw very plainly something was wrong.

Presently she spoke of Honor; not openly as usual but diffidently and at last said:

"Lawrence, I am dying to tell you something which no one else here knows yet—Honor's coming back to us—coming home."

Lawrence started so violently he nearly upset his teacup.

"It's all right," she assured him hastily; "it's only because she wants to write her book and can't seem to do it there. I heard yesterday, but the dates aren't quite settled. They may be going to travel first, so I'm not to say anything here at present and don't tell Andrea."

Lawrence assured her in a matter of fact tone he would not dream of telling Andrea, and then put his head down on the arm of the sofa and cried.

"I thought you would be pleased," remarked Alice severely, pouring him out a fresh cup of tea. "I am—at least I think so."

"So am I—that's just it," gasped poor Lawrence. "I wanted her so badly."

"We all want her. And it's all Andrea's fault—he shouldn't have introduced them. Not but what I am glad for Honor's sake. She's tremendously happy,

you know. I can't think why she bothers about writing books now."

She put the tea within Lawrence's reach and pretended to hunt for her knitting to give him a chance to recover himself. Her kind heart ached to comfort him, he looked so forlorn and tired, but she had neither the courage nor the self abnegation to act on her kindest instincts. Still, she did very well considering she was not Honor. He did pull himself together, apologised shyly and drank his tea.

"Evidently Mr. Timmins isn't coming," Alice remarked. "That's quite an event. Do you know Wilfred has sold a picture? Such a misfortune! It will make him think he can really paint and I have been hoping he'd accept Mr. Timmins's offer and go into boots—I don't know anything about art like the rest of you," she added with sudden asperity; "but I have eyes enough to see Wilfred can't paint any better than I could if I'd wasted ten years playing with a paint box."

"Don't say the rest of us, please," protested Lawrence; "I'm not in it. I told Prudence just now I hated artists."

"You're music," said Alice doubtfully, "and Honor's books; I think it's all the same. If you're big enough it's all right, there's room for you; if you only think you're big enough it's a squash and you tread on other people's toes."

Lawrence leaned his chin on his hands and stared at the carpet.

"Big people do that sometimes."

"Oh well, they don't remain treading on them, you know, and they pay something back."

"And how about finding out if we are big enough? Even that's not plain sailing."

"I expect those who are, have to fight for it," Alice said sagely, "just to prove their right to get through

and jostle other people. If it all comes too easily—sort of profession-from-the-cradle business, it's not much use."

Lawrence went back to St. John's Wood much comforted and found that Andrea, having forgotten tea, was dressing to go out to dinner in an amazingly good temper. He called out to Lawrence as he heard him pass on his way upstairs:

"Go and change and we'll dine at Frascati's, I forgot to have any tea—hurry up."

As he obeyed, Lawrence wondered if it were by way of "making up," and decided—quite rightly—it was not.

However, when they were in the cab on their way eastward, Andrea said abruptly:

"You can tell your Bertini, or whatever his name is, he can apply to me when he wants some more money, but his hours must fit in with mine. We'll go down to Soho after dinner and hunt for a new model in Dishart's place. You are not quite solid enough yet."

Lawrence said "thank you," gravely, but quite sincerely, and spent some minutes debating whether he should confess to the five pound note or not. He decided at last he wouldn't because one never knew how long Andrea's moods would last and he might forget about Bertini.

He had no inclination at all to confess to his other secret concerning Honor's approaching return.

CHAPTER V.

HONOR'S RETURN.

LAWRENCE was quite right as to the instability of Andrea's mood once the intoxication of achievement had worn off. When he was again chiefly concerned in the technique of drapery and reflected lights he became fitful, capricious and moody, and girded continually at an empty and desolate London. At the beginning of August, he flung work aside and went yachting with some new friends, but they ended by boring him and having declined none to politely to paint his hostess's portrait, he returned to London where Lawrence, having had some blissful weeks of uninterrupted work, for it had not occurred to Andrea he too might need a change, was none too pleased to receive him.

Andrea related the experiences of the yachting trip to him with unabashed candour.

"Paint her indeed! I nearly told her I didn't paint wax dolls, she must go to a toy-shop. What on earth did she take me for?"

"What did you tell her?" questioned Lawrence curiously.

"That I only painted portraits when there was something besides a pretty face to paint."

"Whatever did she say?"

"Lots of things, most of them silly and some of them rude. We quarreled, of course—I meant to—I don't know what's come to women," he went on in an agrieved tone; "they are all such fools nowadays. It was amusing when one had Honor round by way of contrast, now it's simply boring. No, I don't want

you, I've nothing to paint and couldn't paint it if I had."

He broke up a couple of old brushes and flung them into the empty grate as he spoke. Lawrence went out.

Andrea wandered idly round the room, pulled out sketch books and canvases and finally stopped before the "Saul of Tarsus" picture.

It was the only real good bit of work he had done since Honor left, he decided (it was not in the least true but he chose to think so). Except for that, he had wasted his time and she was wasting her time just in order that Anthony should have his socks darned. Confound him! It was preposterous.

The doll-like lady must certainly have grated very badly on Andrea's nerves, or he would hardly have been so possessed with desire to feed his year-old grudge against his cousin, which really had not troubled him very profoundly before his visit to Italy. He found some sketches of a St. Theresa he had once intended to paint and present to a convent in Spain where he had met with unexpected kindness and appreciation. The idea rather appealed to him now, or the sketches did. But considering the sort of women he was apparently condemned to meet, how on earth was he to set about it? He must get the atmosphere—which meant Honor—and Italy was a beastly long way off!

He stuck up an empty canvas and began blocking in a face, but he could only recall the dolly expression of his late hostess or, as an alternative, the mocking daring of a face that he did not in the least wish to see again; when the rough sketch grew like this he frowned and rubbed it out. It is an inexplicable fact and deserves consideration, that in none of Andrea Bradon's pictures is there a woman's face that repels. Any one of those magical creations of his may excite wonder, pity, hate or love, but none will the beholder

despise or shrink from. Those who know Andrea best can offer least explanation of the fact.

His resentment against Anthony increased. Here he was, desirous of portraying a woman—a saint—a picture to live, to which good women would say their prayers, and Anthony had taken away the source of his inspiration! It did not matter in the least that five years ago, when Honor was in three-quarter frocks and her hair in a pigtail, he had painted quite admirably without her unsuspected assistance. Since then he had had her and he wanted her again.

At which moment the door of the room opened and Honor came in.

"I did knock," she said reproachfully; "but you wouldn't answer, so I thought you must be out."

Kind Heaven above! It was like the sun shining through fog—like summer in winter, a rainbow after storm! He seized her hands and drew her to the window.

"I must just see you *are* real," he said grimly. "I don't remember uttering any charm and I haven't meddled with magic—unless crystal-gazing is magic—but if you are real flesh and blood, take off your hat and tell me how you came here."

"By 'bus from Kilburn, and then on my feet," she told him flippantly, but evidently pleased at her welcome. "I can't take my hat off unless you let go my hands."

"I was cursing heaven and earth for your absence," he told her, "It's really a miracle."

It was a miracle very largely of his own making had he known it, or had she known it.

"I arrived yesterday morning, I came through from Vienna with the Da Fabras. Anthony put me in their charge."

"Worthy people!" murmured Andrea.

"Exactly. Well, that belongs to yesterday, and

to-day, you see, I considered it my duty to call on you."

"I am delighted." He looked at her straightly. "No doubt you have come over to make final arrangements with Silverman?"

Her face grew suddenly troubled. She went over to the fireplace and began playing with the queer bronzes on the mantelshelf.

Andrea watched her with delicious satisfaction.

"That's what I want to see you about—you are not to be triumphant and horrid—please don't."

"Don't what?"

"Be triumphant—just because you are right—and it all hurts so, not to be master of one's will. I've come away in order to write the book, Andrea."

He was not triumphant aloud, what did it matter? She was there, tangible proof of the power of those little insidious remarks of his. He was moved to unwarranted generosity.

"I never seriously believed you would leave Guardian for that, but I'm very glad you have."

Still she did not look round. She wanted to define her position once for all to herself, as well as to him, so that there could be no future mistake.

"It was perfectly awful leaving him, Andrea. But he understood so well and made it easy. And since the stupid thing's got to be written, what could I do? I wish some one else would write it."

There was quite a little tinge of viciousness in her voice.

"Andrea," she came back to him and seated herself on the arm of the chair that held her hat; "Andrea, do you get like that sometimes with your pictures—wish some one else would paint the tiresome things? It's just as if they were all there—pictures and books and things—in some other country, waiting to get through into this, and making us *make* them whether we will or no."

"We generally 'will' when we start," he answered drily. "It's a great deal more annoying when they don't want to be made."

"Ah, that's because you have no other life. You've given all, everything, to them." She contemplated him with impersonal respect. "But I am not like that—not so big. I am not sure I wouldn't rather they let me go."

"Rot! Wait till you are up to your eyes in it again and the thing's taking form, and every stroke—every word—means something definite and is building up whatever it is you've seen in your mind, bit by bit. Wait till you are ready to curse the days for being too short, when you can't work fast enough, when you're ready to go on, on, on, day and night till it's finished—born."

He lost not one shade of the expressions chasing each other across her face and dropped his voice at the last words to leave her as she was, with slightly parted lips, quick breathing, her eyes looking past him into the visionary land. Oh, it was good, very good, to have Honor back again! Something inside Andrea, that served him for a heart, set up a low rapturous measure and he longed to laugh for pure joy at the lilt of it.

"Tell me about the book, Honor, what it stands for?"

She told him. It may be she was less chaotic than when she had spoken of it to Anthony for Andrea spanned the gulfs easily and his stride kept pace with her. He saw it as she saw it, clear of incident, plot, and the necessary dress, and it became clearer to her because he saw it, or made her believe he did.

"I'm going to begin to-morrow, I got some paper to-day on my way here. It will be quite easy. I see just how it's to go now. How selfish I am, Andrea. How about your work?"

"Come and see."

He crossed the room and pushed "Saul of Tarsus" into proper light and watched her intently.

"Oh!" whispered Honor, her heart in her mouth for the wonder of it. "Oh Andrea, how could you bear *seeing* it?"

He laughed a little exultant laugh, remembering the day it was done and the failing light.

"It's all trick, of course," he said teasingly. "Come over here, you'll see the brush work."

"It's not trick!" she protested indignantly, and then laughed herself to have been so readily caught "on the rise."

"There's some trick," he insisted, and put his hands on her shoulders to turn her the way he wished. They stood so a moment unconsciously, his hands resting on her.

Lawrence, opening the door at that minute, saw them standing together and knew with sharp, bitter disappointment he was not wholly glad that Honor had "come home."

"You knew Honor was coming back. Why didn't you tell me?"

Lawrence arranged the last pieces of music on the pile beside him very carefully. He was seated before his piano and had been indulging in the now rare luxury of "a playing fit" as divorced from practice.

Andrea's excursions into the upper regions of his own house were so infrequent as to be a negligible quality and Lawrence was by no means pleased at this inversion of the natural order of things.

"Why didn't you tell me?" repeated Andrea, gazing out of the window.

"It seemed quite likely you had heard," Lawrence said at length.

"Don't you see the letters before I come down?"

It was on the other's lips to remind his father he had a club address as well as a studio one, but he refrained.

Of late, it had been a question of refraining several times with Lawrence; there had been many things he ached to say, since Honor's arrival two weeks ago.

"Alice Passfield told you in July, I'm sure," Andrea went on with languid insistence.

"Yes, she did not want it mentioned."

Andrea laughed.

The queer inward light showed in Lawrence's eyes, he faced his father's inquisitorial gaze steadily.

"I don't think you need be told any other reason."

And again Andrea laughed.

"Poor Anthony," he said mockingly. "Well, it's not my affair, Lawrence. I've come to hear you play."

Again their looks met in silent conflict and the elder man won.

Lawrence wheeled around to his piano again, and began a "Nachte Struche" of Schumann's.

Presently he began to play something of his own and the hard line about his mouth and the slight hardness in his touch faded away.

Andrea shifted his position—quietly. He did not know one note of music from another nor care about it, but he cared very much for that at which he was looking.

There was the room with its white walls and bare floor, the curtainless window. It contained only two chairs, a table covered with music and the piano.

The light fell on the keyboard and on Lawrence's hands, his face was in shadow—his delicate, fair face—that "field for emotion," as Andrea had termed it. It was wonderful to him; more wonderful than Schu-

mann's magic or than the magic of those white hands controlling these new melting, sliding harmonies and master of them.

Andrew drew a letter from his pocket and began to draw on the half sheet—a mere memorandum of a shadowed face and the slim hands.

The music stopped and Lawrence was aware of the material world again. He turned round to his audience.

"Do you like it?" he demanded with curious fierce directness.

Then he saw what the audience was doing and sprang up, his face quivering with passion, such as Andrea had never suspected could lie behind that delicate field.

"No, you shall not do that *here*," he cried, though like Andrea, when he was really angry, his voice was low and not raised. "Oh, it's unspeakable! Even for you, it's not decent! You come up here unasked to the only corner in the world I can call my own—and I've earned the right to it a hundred times, and ask me to play to you—for I've got my master passion as well as you—and you ask not because you care for it or understand it, but just that it may supply food for your damned pictures. You'd leave me not one inch of soul or body of my own. I've borne it, I've got to, it seems, though I don't know why. But there's one thing you shall not touch, that is my own—that's my passion—my life! Down below there you can do what you will with me. Up here, it's my world—and I'll keep it so—clean! Give me what you've drawn!"

He held out his young, authoritative, insistent hands that trembled with the strength of his passion and bridged over the years that separated them. It was man to man, not father to son, boy to master.

Andrea quite gravely tore off the half sheet and handed it to him and he winced a little as Lawrence tore it in pieces without a look at it.

"That's all, you see?" Andrea held out the remains of the letter for inspection, a smile twitching his lips. "I hadn't the remotest idea you'd take it like that. Accept my profound apologies. Did you learn to swear from me, Lawrence? I hope not, it's a deplorable habit."

He turned carelessly to the door. Lawrence stumbled back to his music stool and hid his face in his hands.

At the door Andrea looked back and hesitated. He might know nothing of music and very little of Lawrence, but he did understand a master passion when he saw it.

"Was that something of your own you were playing, Lawrence?" he asked with quite genuine interest. "I don't understand music but it sounded to me quite extraordinarily good, as if it would stand wear and tear."

Then he went downstairs.

Lawrence heard him go, heard his footsteps get fainter and fainter, and he lifted up his head and shivered with cold.

First he gathered up those bits of torn paper and burned them in the grate, then he opened the window wide and leant out, and he hated himself because he knew deep down in his heart he was glad Andrea had approved his music.

Andrea went out. He went to call on Honor. He was exultant, jubilant, and lighthearted, but he did not mention the afternoon's occurrence to her though it had been so tremendously interesting. Life was full of surprises and foolish people. And Lawrence was really nearly a man now and more than usually inter-

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esting. Let him stick to his master passion, he seemed some good at it. All the same he would paint that picture some day!

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS IN LONDON.

ANTHONY kept his promise and came to London for Christmas to find an excited, exultant Honor. For the book was finished. She had written it all in three delirious months of work and Silverman rubbed his hands (or his representative did) and found nothing to say about its delayed appearance. They would find room for it in the coming season; it should appear early in February—be pushed through at all costs—so long as Mrs. Bradon would stay in London and correct proofs at lightning speed! Mrs. Bradon was quite content to do that.

Anthony arrived a day sooner than expected owing to the failure of an appointment in Paris. He did not trouble to wire but drove straight to Kilburn and Alice received him.

"Honor's out," she said without apology; "but she'll be in for tea." As an after-thought, she added: "She'll be tremendously glad to see you."

She looked at her brother-in-law with frank curiosity. She had not asked many questions of Honor, indeed, Honor had been too deeply engaged to be very approachable, but she had cogitated a good deal over matters and was not too well satisfied.

"It seems to me," she remarked in her blunt way. "That people so occupied as you and Honor seem to be could get on just as well if you were not married."

"I don't get on at all," protested Anthony. "I only vegetate."

"Honor imagines you working yourself to death."

"Do I look like it?"

"Yes, I think you look a little that way. Probably it comes to the same thing in the end—vegetating and overworking."

The drawing room door was flung open and Honor rushed in.

There was not the slightest doubt as to her joy at seeing him. It was the rapture of a homesick schoolgirl at sight of a desired relation.

Alice regarded them a moment and then went away without excuse.

"It's finished," Honor said softly, her fingers busying themselves with the buttons of his coat.

"Then you can come back with me?" the thought and hope sprang instantly to his lips.

"I must stay for the proofs. They'll start in January—first week. And then—" She stroked his arm caressingly, "then I think I want to be here when it comes out."

"Of course—I am stupid." He stooped and kissed her.

What a child she was—doubly, trebly a child in these surroundings where she had been in literal fact, baby, growing child, schoolgirl and Honor Passfield.

He explained his unexpected arrival on which it had not occurred to her to question him.

"Somehow I felt you would be out, as soon as I turned in at the gate," he confessed.

"I had been to see Andrea. He's painting a St. Teresa for a convent in Spain and he wanted me to sit. Of course, I couldn't while I was writing."

"Nor now," he protested. "I'm home for a holiday and you have got to amuse me. Where shall we stay?"

Just for a moment she looked blank and confused.

That three months' work had rubbed out so many impressions.

"Where would you like to go?"

"I hadn't thought of going anywhere but here," she confessed. "I remember you did mention it in a letter."

"Poor Alice! I am quite sure she has had enough of you and doesn't want me."

"But for Christmas? We need not go right away out of London, need we?"

"Little Cockney! No, my dear, it's you who are to choose."

"But it's your holiday, you said so."

"I take it that way, please."

"Guardini doesn't seem a bit real," she remarked, after a pause. "Doesn't it seem a dream to you too, that we were ever there together? I feel it's just like it was—before—before we were married."

"How dare you? And it's not true! You were shy and afraid of me and treated me with absurd deference," he half laughed, half upbraided her. But her words had sent a chill to his heart.

"Did I?—and don't I? I am afraid of you. I won't come back at all till you have read 'The Dominant Chord.' I shan't dare to! If you don't like it you can write and say so."

She had dedicated the book to him and longed to say so, like a child who can't keep it's best secret, but she just managed it.

In the end he took some rooms in Whitehall Court from a friend who was going away for Christmas, and they installed themselves there very comfortably. Honor said that at last she knew what it would be like to live in a palace and insisted on Andrea and Lawrence dining with them the second night of their installation.

Andrea behaved in the most exemplary manner. He

did not actually call her Mrs. Bradon, but his behaviour was exactly calculated to bestow that dignity upon her.

"When do you go back?" he asked, while Honor and Lawrence were busy criticising the merits of the piano of the flat.

"In three weeks. I've got to meet Dr. Giraldi, the Government head of the Tropical Disease Department over there. They have offered me rooms in the Bologna Laboratory."

"That's what you want, isn't it?"

Anthony hesitated.

"Yes, in a way. But it's only the remedy they are taking up, so far. They want far more proof than I'm ready to offer them yet, seriously to take up the theory, you know, and that is the real thing I care about."

"Hand it all over to them, turn out Rosshaw, and settle at Wallingford," said Andrea abruptly.

"Soon, when it's ready to hand over."

"Honor goes back with you, I suppose?" Andrea's voice was careless enough.

"Well, she wants to stay till her book is out?"

Andrea's look became quizzical.

"And you agree?"

"It's a natural enough desire."

"Of course, nothing could be more so."

Later on he asked if Honor were to be still in England, could she give him sittings for the *Theresa* picture. He most fully intended doing so, nevertheless he asked and knew Anthony would have liked to refuse.

"Why on earth doesn't he?" he questioned in his mind. "If Honor were my wife I'd be hanged if she should sit for my own brother, much less a cousin."

He was vaguely discontented. He would much rather have had the sittings in defiance of Anthony,

as he probably would have done had Anthony refused.

Presently, Anthony chanced to ask Honor when she had last seen Lady Lewisham, and she gave a little conscience-stricken glance at Andrea, who would not see it.

"My dear, I haven't been anywhere! Yes, you did mention it and I really meant to go."

Presumably the studio in St. John's Wood did not count as anywhere, but it was Andrea who noted that fact. Honor would have said that was work, she *had* to talk of her book to some one. But what weighed on her was, that she had started one day to pay the promised call and had met Andrea and had allowed him to inveigle her to the Zoo, instead of to Hampstead.

Later on, Lawrence played to them and Andrea, who had not heard him since that day in the upper room, carefully sat where Lawrence could see him with his empty hands in full evidence. Lawrence both saw and understood, and was not disconcerted, if that were his father's idea. He was rather pleased than otherwise.

He played well. He played to Honor as she sat gazing into the fire and seeing all the hopes and aspirations committed to paper soaring up and up to fulfilment. She re-read in her mind all those sentences and scenes she loved so dearly, not because they were hers, but because of themselves, because of the truth they held, because of the eternal joy of understanding some little corner of that complex nature of humanity and the unfathomable rules that govern it. She longed for Anthony to read just these certain bits, she thought with grateful pride of the little audience of readers unknown to her scattered about the country, who would be pleased or displeased.

Anthony had his dreams too, though they perhaps lacked the buoyant certainty of Honor's. Dreams of

the fulfilment of his own deep-seated desires, of the life he still meant should be his and hers in the future, when he might honourably put his self-chosen task into other hands. Dreams of her issuing from the child into the woman and still his; of the day when he could repair that blunder of his on the balcony over the shut-in garden at Wallingford, and ask of her not her life but her love.

Andrea wondered what was going to be the outcome of it all, when two people wanted the same thing, for he knew what Anthony wanted and he was perfectly aware now that he himself required Honor to hang on the walls of his soul, so to speak, and to direct his inspiration. He wanted nothing else. He even felt a little thrill of virtue, as he recognized the fact. He wanted that very badly, however, and he was not at all accustomed to having his wants unfulfilled.

But Lawrence, though he had started to play for Honor, forgot her and forgot his father. He went further than any of them—into the land of beautiful language, into the arms of his Master Passion.

Honor and Anthony spent that Christmas time in a riot of childish pleasures. He discovered there were certain joys from which the little Passfields had been debarred in childhood, by Alice's stern dictum "costs too much money," that these desires still lived, at least in Honor's imagination, as joys pertaining to the fortunate only. Anthony very naturally set to work to prove to her she was of the fortunate number. It was not merely the feast of amusement laid out for them, but the way of enjoying it that caused Honor such exquisite pleasure and such scandal at the bare doing of it.

There were pantomimes, plays, shows, visits to big stores, with all the wonder and joy of shopping with a well-filled purse. Anthony kept it filled and her gratitude was great and generously expressed.

Also he straightened out with infinite tact certain family difficulties and was business-like and insistent as to the terms on which Honor returned to her old home.

Honor was tremendously happy, and immensely alive. She was less in awe of Anthony here in familiar surroundings than in Guardini where everyone treated him with such scrupulous respect. It was good for him too. He understood at last just what he did stand for in her life, and however far it was from what he hoped to gain, still he recognized it was all he had ever stipulated for—all perhaps she was ready to give at this time.

But she never forgot the book. Try as she would to disguise her anxiety it peered shyly out from behind all her interest. Her thoughts when not actively engaged were with it. Andrea teased her over it and she would turn to Anthony for protection, and from that shelter declare she was not in the least anxious about it, that it was good and if they failed to see its excellencies when it appeared, the loss would be theirs.

"But it's all you, really," she said to Anthony one day, having got rid of Andrea. "I could have made the story but I couldn't have seen what it meant unless I met you."

"It's only that you have seen a bit more of life," he told her indulgently.

"Yes, that's what you promised me. Faithful Anthony!"

That was his reward and he made what he could of it and blamed himself because of the little dull ache that clung to his heart.

Lady Lewisham, with her abominable directness, asked him one day what he thought of Honor's friendship with Andrea.

"I owe her to it," he said quietly.

"Yes, but now."

He had nothing to say to that.

"I should think you were the only man in London who would trust Andrea's discretion in friendship," she told him bluntly.

He looked straight at the old lady and she quailed a little.

"Andrea is Honor's friend," he said, "and mine too. One isn't friends with a man one doesn't trust. Andrea knows that too. If he didn't there might be something to say. As he does know, there is and will be nothing."

She pretended to be crushed, but in her heart she told herself he was a fool—a dear fool notwithstanding!

Also as a parting shot she told him to take Honor back with him.

"I've promised her she may stay till the book is out."

"Then stay yourself."

"I would if I could; it's impossible."

"You are as bad as one another," she cried impatiently. "She deserts you for her hobby and you value your precious ambition more than your own happiness or hers. I suppose that's what they call love nowadays."

Anthony did not confess to her how, at the back of his mind all those merry holidays, there had hovered a persistent thought that he would do better to carry Honor off to some wilderness away from this material world of good things and there teach her to love by all the arts and wiles known to man and woman in her own country of romance. He had resisted it as a temptation involving dishonour both to his work and to her. Nevertheless the ache of the desire was there and never more than on the day of his departure.

To the end she spoke often of the coming spring

in Guardini, of joining him there, of his work and what they would do when she came. But these were not expression of an active faith, they were just conjectures of future possibilities.

"I shall not ask her to come back to me," said Anthony to himself steadily; "because until she comes of her own will, desire, and need, it will count as nothing, it will mean separation again. She will come when her heart tells her to, and I shall be ready for her."

CHAPTER VII.

SUCCESS.

"It is the most beautiful thing I have read for twenty years," pronounced Wilberton.

Wilberton was a critic—a real professional one—so the table held its breath and its many tongues and leaned forward to take in his words.

"You did not say so in your review," Miss Burnside reminded him, rather sharply.

"I had too much respect for the writer; she deserves to be taken seriously, not fed on sweets."

"Take care, Mr. Wilberton," put in his hostess. "Miss Passfield may have relations present, for all you know."

There was a glimmer of malice in her kind eyes. She was not fond of Wilberton, though she liked to get him at her parties. She was an ugly woman who made up for her plainness by her wit and the quality of her dinners, and she invariably knew all there was worth knowing about the latest "lion" or "lioness."

Wilberton looked round the table with a slow smile.

"I might have said still prettier things if you had not warned me, and I am sure that to be related to Miss Passfield is an honour one would gladly avow."

"I agree with you," said Andrea Bradon, calmly. "But my claim is of the slightest. Miss Passfield happens to be my cousin, Anthony Bradon's wife."

"And you know her?"

The débutante whom he had been given as a dinner partner—for his sins he considered—turned to him eagerly.

"Yes, I have the honour, and she is as charming as her books, Miss Mazon, which I am sure you will agree is saying a great deal."

The whole table became engrossed in the subject since Mr. Bradon's claim did not appear sufficiently personal to forbid its discussion.

Andrea's quick ears caught detached remarks and odd words, enthusiastic or cutting, never indifferent. He was profoundly amused, perhaps after all it had not been such a mistake to accept Lady Lingard's invitation as he had been imagining.

"No, no, not my school, of course; but if you *will* have these idealist writers, it's as good as you can get."

"I've given five copies of it away already. Oh yes, *quite* young people."

"There never were men like hers, you know," he heard Miss Burnside say, in her thin, sarcastic voice; and Wilberton who was evidently tired of her sharpness, answered rather testily:

"Perhaps not, but a good many men wouldn't mind being like them if they had her women to make it worth while."

Miss Burnside flushed and remarked drily they were both impossibly nice.

Every one at the table had read or was reading "The Dominant Chord," for it had caught on in that inexplicable way that even a good book will catch on sometimes, as a reward to faithful publishers and a lure to unknown authors.

Andrea, to his intense joy, found himself basking in the unusual light of a reflected glory. He professed very little knowledge of Mrs. Bradon, however, and preserved a severely impartial attitude towards her achievements. How they would have revelled in the knowledge that it was his doing she was Mrs. Bradon, or still more, in the information that she was now

sitting to him for the picture of St. Theresa, and most of all in the fact that she had both made and served him with tea that afternoon. But they did not know, which was perhaps just as well for Honor.

Someone asked where they lived.

Andrea answered glibly that his cousin was working in Italy at present.

A man who knew Andrea slightly and also knew something about Miss Passfield looked up sharply, as if about to speak and refrained.

When they were collected together again in the drawing room, Lady Lingard seized hold of Andrea and carried him off to introduce him to a magnificently dressed but neurotic-looking woman, whose chief claim to attention lay in the unspeakable unhappiness of her eyes, that even the useful conventions of society could not veil.

"Mrs. Warman very much wishes to know Miss Passfield's—I should say Mrs. Bradon's—cousin;" she told Andrea in her rather mischievous way. "I am afraid you are in danger of losing your own personal homage, Mr. Bradon."

"It's in a good cause. I shall be charmed to meet Mrs. Bradon's admirer."

Mrs. Walman held out her hand to him unconventionally, and Andrea was at once struck with her eyes.

"I hope you are also an admirer of Miss Passfield's books?" she asked.

"They are quite excellent," he told her gravely; "but I think no one would be more surprised at the conversation during dinner than Miss Passfield herself."

"You see her sometimes?" Her voice was eager and urgent.

Andrea admitted he did occasionally see her.

"I don't like to write to her," went on Mrs. Warman.

"No doubt many people do—but if I did, I should say too much; I know myself!" She smiled forlornly. "Will you convey a message for me?"

Andrea wondered why on earth Lady Lingard knew any one so utterly impossible as this, and decided quite to his own satisfaction, it must be because she dressed so well. It was quite legitimate, he thought, to put up with her intenseness if Paquin was pleased to hang such creations upon her!

He expressed his readiness to be a messenger.

"Tell her—" the beautiful Paquin-model's eyes looked past Andrea into the obscure darkness of the conversatory; "—tell her that I wished to thank her—that her book helped some one over a bad place; if any living woman can believe in other men and women like that, it's bound to help."

"I am sure she will feel repaid for any trouble she has taken," Andrea returned, with proper gravity.

She turned to him eagerly.

"You think so really? And that she will not mind my saying it? It helped so much, you see," she caught herself up and bit her lip.

Andrea decided he would give himself just fifteen minutes to learn all there was to learn and in fifteen minutes precisely he had a perfect understanding of a not very original, but none the less tragic history, though Mrs. Warman had not the least idea she had given herself away and only thought Mr. Bradon the most sympathetic man she had met for years. She asked him to call on her and he promised to do so without much intention of keeping the promise, unless those amazingly unhappy eyes should be useful.

That was the beginning of Honor Passfield's success.

The new book was accepted in all circles as "just lovely"—"an excellent piece of work"—or, "a proof that a woman can achieve style." Her old books were on the road to re-prints. *The Spectator* gave her a

whole article; it was this paper which had called attention to her "style."

In short, Honor, having by the magic of her awakening mind created a beautiful story, had by the almost unconscious dexterity of her real talent, created also what might pass in the twentieth century as a masterpiece of fiction.

She remained unspoiled; that was the crowning miracle of all. She accepted the rapturous plaudits of society and never fell into the error of taking them too seriously, or considering herself as one with a mission, or believing in her own importance. She would laugh over the ridiculous things said to her and of her with Andrea, and perhaps to one person in a hundred the depths and strength of her faith, of her absorbing love of truth on its higher side rather than its lower, was apparent.

But she stayed in London.

No praise, of all that was poured out on her, found such foothold in her heart as Anthony's quiet triumph in her success. His letter thereon crowned her with the lovely humility of understanding, fired her with desire for achievement, lifted her aspirations. It was good, Anthony had said, but it was only a beginning, a promise. There were faults—he put his finger on them—very tenderly, almost as if he rejoiced they remained to be eradicated by further growth.

He scanned each letter of hers for word of her return, and told himself steadily that it would be unnatural to expect her to curtail her first taste of "fame;" which would never taste just the same again. He adhered religiously to his vow to leave her free of any hint of his own will or need, till her heart spoke for him.

He made a great effort to come to her, but with the spring the pellagra suddenly repented of its year of quiescence and sprang up with redoubled violence.

The Italian Government clamoured for his remedy and Anthony was forced to neglect his more absorbing work and to establish a separate laboratory for the cure in Brescia.

Society continued to fête and pet Honor. She was so entirely different from any previous "lion" or "lioness," that she became a vogue. She took it all with such a charming mixture of gaiety and seriousness that mere superficial admirers could not understand her, and dropped off; but there remained plenty of the genuine ones to carry on the game.

Her own family, with rare tact, refused to emerge into the footlights of fashionable circles with her, but they claimed her occasionally for their own radius with enormous success. Lady Lewisham stood sponsor for her elsewhere. Many people indeed connected her exclusively with Anthony's cousin. Very occasionally, Mr. Passfield emerged into publicity on her earnest request, but neither Alice nor Prudence would allow themselves to be "tacked on to her," as they vulgarly put it. Sara, with rather wistful eyes, would have heroically followed suit, but she fell an easier prey to Honor's blandishments and did sometimes follow in her wake and take stock of finely dressed women, of luxurious living, and all the things for which her little soul craved.

Alice's reiterated reasons for the family reticence were plainly expressed:

"It's not Miss Passfield who is being fêted, it's Mrs. Bradon—if you were still Honor Passfield you would be run after by us and the sort of people we know, and Silverman's set, but because you are Mrs. Bradon and Honor Passfield in one, they like to think you belong to them and open their doors. I like Anthony very much but I am not going to borrow his name to crawl into society with."

Honor acknowledged it was true without damage to

her pride. She loved to meet Anthony's friends and to make them approve of her. Some of her shyness and some of her frank ways wore off under the new experiences.

Lady Lewisham took a great fancy to her, and forgave her for having destroyed her greater hopes for Anthony. She kept a sharp but kindly eye on her too and, as far as she could, saw to it that Honor did not see too much of Andrea. But at the end of March the old lady fell ill and was ordered to Torquay. She made a wry face over it, yet life was still dear to her, and she departed, having written to Anthony to tell him he had better return and chaperone his wife himself.

Since Honor was with her own family, Anthony did not see the need of chaperonage, but he sighed regretfully over the impossibility of taking his old cousin's advice.

"I ought to go back," said Honor, resting her chin on her hands and gazing straight out of the window.

"Has he written to ask you?" Andrea enquired, curiously. "It will be a big change, you know."

"I am getting tired of all this."

"Ah, that's a different thing. If you really prefer darning socks and ordering dinners to buying the one and eating the other—go! I thought you were thinking you were wanted."

"I am wanted!" she declared, defiantly.

Andrea's silence was more than negative, it was positively contradictory.

"Still he has not asked you to go back," he insisted at last, since she maintained silence.

"I did not say so."

"I must have gathered it. Come to the Grafton Galleries this afternoon with me."

"There's a *St. Theresa* there. Won't it upset your ideas?" suggested Honor, wickedly.

"I'll risk that. It can't be more upsetting than you at this moment. Attention—please—pose!"

She obeyed.

The "St. Theresa" picture had hung fire. Honor's leisure had not been quite so much at Andrea's service as he had imagined, thanks to Lady Lewisham. He had grumbled and lost the thread of the thing; then caught it again one evening at the theatre, watching Honor's face during a play. He had demanded her attention to his need with a directness that was most likely to influence her, and for the last week since Lady Lewisham had left, she had been generous with her time and it would be a good picture after all, that the worthy nuns should have to show to future guests!

And now just as he was achieving this, she talked of returning to Italy. She should return when he could do without her, not a day before! There was a certain ugly hardening of his jaw, as he thought it, but he painted steadily on.

"Anthony probably finds he can get through a lot more work in your absence than in your presence." He flung out the suggestion in his usual apparently careless way.

"I don't interrupt him."

"You are interrupting me at present. Do keep still. I only gathered that from a letter I had last week, saying, that in spite of the extra work over his precious cure, he had done more towards his real end during the last two months than in all last season."

Honor was silent for quite five minutes.

"That's because there's so much pellagra," she remarked in an unconvinced manner.

"Very likely."

He did not return to the subject that day.

In the afternoon he took Honor to the Grafton Galleries. As a rule he was very careful not to escort

"Mrs. Bradon" about publicity, irrespective of Lady Lewisham's sharp eyes. Still, he held himself irresponsible for chance meetings which were so frequent at different houses. Even Lady Lewisham could not, however, consider it was not legitimate that Andrea Bradon—artist—should conduct his cousin's wife to so sober a picture gallery. The fitness or unfitness of Andrea's company anywhere did not trouble Honor now any more than of old. She took what came without thought or question, and was invariably pleased when it was Andrea who "came."

He did not see her again for two days after this, when she gave him another sitting.

She had heard from Anthony that morning, a kind, affectionate letter, rejoicing in her pleasure, solicitous for her welfare, and full of amusing little stories of the doings of Angelo and others of the infant brigade. But he said nothing at all as to wanting her back, and she noticed it the more because of Andrea's previous remarks. Andrea was quite aware of the cloud on her face, but it suited him this morning to have it there, so he made no attempt to relieve it. She was very unusually silent for a long time, and then remarked *à propos* of nothing.

"I am sure he wants me back."

If she were so sure then the faint note of enquiry in her voice was surely superfluous.

"Then why don't you go? No doubt you know best. I only gave you my impression. He always pretends to me that he cares for your career more than for any thing on earth—except pellagra, of course."

Honor lost her pose—re-found it with difficulty. He was patient over that—for him. He stepped back to look at his work.

Yes, it was quite good but there was much more to be done. Honor must certainly not go back yet. His eyes wandered round the room, noted her hat lying

on the table and the pile of new material for casement curtains which she had offered to make, and which they had been measuring together that morning. Quite certainly, Honor must not go yet!

Outside the east wind drove through the cold sunshine of spring which was late that year. The bare trees swayed in it and dust whirled in little eddies in unexpected corners. March cast his shadow into April.

The studio needed its big fire as well as its radiators. Honor decided between her imaginary flights to Italy and back, that she must hurry up with the curtains. The present ones looked so dirty in the new spring sunshine. She wished she knew if Anthony really wanted her, but how was she to know if he did not say? If he did she would go back to-morrow. She was nearly certain she wanted to go.

He really had not worked very hard when she was there, nothing like so hard as she had before Christmas, for example. He had always had time to take her for walks and excursions, to idle on the shore of the little lake or play in the garden. But the harder he worked the sooner they would be together at Wallingford again. Dear, beautiful Wallingford! There was always a little fluttering catch at her heart when she thought of it. She could not bring herself really to believe those days at Wallingford would return. It was like one of her own stories she had loved writing and that she still loved to think about, though it could never be rewritten again. She did not think like this of the Villa Guardini. There were times when she ached with longing to see it again, yet always so soon as she was conscious of this, something that had slept within her there, as in an enchanted palace, something that fiercely demanded outlet and not sleep, fought against her desire. That creative faculty within was not yet her servant, but still a jealous master.

"I think," said Andrea meditatively, after a long

quiet, "that you are letting this get on your mind, Honor—Italy and Anthony. Why don't you realise that you are doing and having just what he meant you to do and have, when he married you."

Andrea felt a thrill of virtue, insomuch as Anthony had actually tried to convey this impression to him before the ridiculous marriage.

"I don't understand," she said, with uneasy eyes.

"It's difficult to put into other words, but Anthony is such an infernally helpful old chap, he goes about the world looking out for people to help, always did—sort of knight-errant business, you know. Look at Nicholls, the fellow who works for him in Roumania, look at Leonello. Look at the pellagra affair. Well? What's Italy to him, or he to Italy? Well, he had the sense to see what you are made of, and what you could do with a little more platform under your feet—so, don't you see, it's mean of you to go on supposing that he's grudging you the results he's put, so to speak, in your reach."

"You mean he married me to help me, not because he loved me?"

Her terrible directness as nearly disconcerted Andrea as anything could do. He looked shocked.

"My dear Honor, you must not say such things! You know he is very fond of you."

"I said *love*—not 'fond,' " she half whispered between shut teeth. He pretended not to hear.

"You might have been writing 'penny dreadfuls' by now, you know you might if it hadn't been for him," he concluded. "And it is your pleasant duty to gratify his whim and your ambitions together—to plume your wings to further flight."

Honor suddenly rose.

"I am not going to sit any more to-day," she declared. "I am going home."

"To-morrow then?"

He forced a consent from her. It fretted him to lose a good morning's work to-day, but better lose that than that she should suffer oblivion in Italy.

Honor went home in a curiously disturbed state of mind. She would not own to herself that Andrea's words had been anything in the nature of a revelation. She told herself she had known from the first that Anthony cared about her writing. Not as Andrea said, of course, but he cared. He had made it quite clear that he cared. She clung tenaciously to this fact that there was nothing new behind the measure of truth that lay in those idle words, yet she remained conscious of a sense of defiance within, an antagonism to the world in general.

When she arrived at St. Jude's Road, she found the drawing room was being turned out, and lunch invisible and uncertain; small matters, which did not serve to allay her unusual irritation. She was going upstairs to take off her hat when a thought struck her, and she knew why she had come home early and what she wanted to do.

"Alice, be a dear, and give me some sandwiches or something I can carry. I'm going out."

Alice, duster in hand, came out into the hall, and looked at her curiously.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know yet—somewhere where I can walk and think. Oh, just do it, there's a dear! I'm in a bad mood, I want air and space and fields."

"There's plenty of air about," Alice remarked, as she made her way towards the kitchen stairs. "Are you going alone?"

"Yes, that's just it. I want to think not to talk."

Half an hour later, she was in the train steaming out of Paddington station towards the first place that had occurred to her as redundant of meadows, fresh air, and empty space.

She knew now that she wanted to get away from some hurtful thought that had no right in her mind at all, or, if it would follow her, to lose it in an empty atmosphere.

She stared out of the window with wistful eyes. Why should it hurt that Anthony had married her partly (she insisted on the "partly") to help her?—To help her become famous! Of course he was fond of her and she of him—she was sure, she was very fond of Anthony.

She was alone in the carriage, so she flung the windows wide open and let the cold air in and found it vivifying.

Andrea had talked a great deal of nonsense and she had been wrong to listen to it, but he had taken her unawares—and even if Anthony was interested in her career, well—it was lovely of him to think of it at all—and she liked knights errant!

She would certainly go back to Guardini, not next week because of Mrs. Aston's party; it would be rude to disappoint her, but quite soon afterwards.

The train drew up at her station and she got out.

There was no doubt as to there being plenty of air about, as Alice had said; it caught her on the platform in a stinging embrace and hurried her along out of the little station by a meadow path, that led across the fields towards the river.

There were also plenty of fields; green meadows still chequered with little rivulets, sheep encumbered, and higher, drier fields where cows fed leisurely and continuously; and always there were the high swaying trees with a dim sense of red life pulsing behind their purple-brown branches, and always the cold, clean, blue sky and the white cloud mountains.

She walked with a swinging step and uplifted face, pleasantly stung by the wind. She was conscious to the innermost depths of her being of the moving

vitality around her which is the beating of the heart of the Great Mother just awakening. She found one primrose or rather a bud under a bank, and refrained from picking it with difficulty.

By fits and starts she remembered that she had come out first to decide on the folly of Andrea's idle words, and then to determine the date of her departure for Italy.

For, of course, it was only a question of *when*. Unfortunately, for these momentous questions, the path she followed was a winding one and each turn revealed some new attraction. The white sheep invited attention and the wind called to her across the flat lands, the river too was full of little eddies and currents, that had to be accounted for. It was always "in the next field" she would begin to think, then "on her way back," and then "in the train," because it was so wasteful not to give oneself to such a day of springing life!

She turned away from the river presently and followed the path across a hill, over a ploughed field whose brown ridges seemed like petrified ripples, and the air was full of the scent of the newly turned earth. Larks were singing overhead, and she stood still to listen and to force her sight to spy one of the choir.

She had not remembered the common heritage of earth was so beautiful, that it could smell so sweet, so resound with music and movement, and it was rapture to know it was here, though she rented not the tiniest field nor owned one-half acre of ground—but still hers by right of her hidden understanding of it.

Next to the ploughed fields was a wide expanse of "roots" withering out before the advance of a sheepfold. Lambs frisked and chased each other through the turnips, and cried with shrill little quavering voices to their placid mothers, making wild dashes on

the moment's impulse for the narrow opening that gave the ingress to the fold.

Honor stayed awhile to watch and laugh at them, and fell into talk with the shepherd.

"Late they be's this year," he told her. "Don't knows as ever I'd sees such a late flock! But they're main good. Dry season, that what it wur. The young things do like the dry surely. They be mortal capricious against cold."

She broke bounds and ate a belated lunch in a little coppice which the wind forgot to visit; the sun, unfanned with his wings, was warm and pleasant, and the air full of sweet voices. But the quiet wood would not hold her unfettered spirit to-day. She deserted it again for the uplands—that world of green and rich brown, of blue and white—clean, beautiful—*real!*

It was a sense of this reality of it that caught her at last. Gripped her with an ecstasy of sheer passionate joy of being. All the strong, young, mounting, throbbing life around her reflected itself in her own soul, every glistening eddy in the silver water of the river below, every eager breaking bud on tree and bush, every ridge of the furrowed earth, held a thousand new meanings and possibilities. The whole exhaustless reservoir of life seemed to have spilled itself over the earth, and of it was born a beauty immeasurable—the glorious awful beauty of manifest life. She was part of it, not only an onlooker. The wind wrapt her in its embrace as it wrapt the rest of the good, good earth. She stood there, brown fields on one side, green fields on the other, nothing between her and blue space above. She was uplifted to the topmost pinnacle of pure life. A silence held her in which all those shouting, insisting voices of the world of mind and illusion fell from her. She was one with the real world at the moment of its seed-time. She knew for

one conscious, passionate moment that her soul was one with the Great Unity.

Clearly and quite definitely there was born to her out of that instant union of soul and body—the material lovely earth and the immaterial, no less lovely, soul—a thought! A clear, wonderful link between herself and this world round her. It was so beautiful, so true, so compelling, that she trembled before it.

"I can't do it," she murmured, with eyes wide open with a fear that is akin to worship. "It's too big for me. Must I?"

But she knew the thought had been given her to use—an inspiration caught out of the clear sky of a spring day. It was like the sudden opening of a window when the glory of the admitted light turned all to gold and she must perforce live in it, move in it, deal with it.

How trivial and small the little she had done and understood seemed to her—less than nothing.

Inspiration had never come to her like this before. Hitherto, the story had been in her mind first, and she had found a setting for it and enshrined some beautiful thought there, half consciously; but now it was the inner thought that she had found first, the setting and the story would have to be made for it.

She walked slowly now, her eyes continually returning to the bare tree tops swaying in the wind, or roving over the open meadow lands with reluctance and gratitude. She was not free and unencumbered any more. She had gone out to greet the spring and it had laid the very essence of its being in her arms.

Her mind came down gradually from these high altitudes. She began to consider the safety of her gift, its workable value.

There would be no dealing with this in three months. No dealing with it at all in crowded places! For the first time in her life she thought of London as a

crowded place. This would require open space and a great peace till she had mastered it. But time was her own.

What story could she plan to hold it worthily? Then again she would not plan because, without doubt, the story itself lay there hidden in the thought and she had only to wait with an open mind to find it.

The actors in it crossed her vision mistily, nodding salutation to her. It was good to think that soon she would know them all quite well, that they would be her friends.

It was not till she was again at the station that she remembered she had originally intended to take the left hand road from there and walk through the lanes towards Wallingford. It was just that little, sharp puff of wind that had impelled her towards the river and the ploughed fields.

There was no train for an hour, so she wandered in the village and got tea at a little shop that seemed amazed at a customer so early in the season. The evening grew colder as the sun sank. She watched it over the level lands westward; a glowing belt of colour marked its setting as if on the limits of the world a giant had lit a fire. The impression that remained most with her as she gazed across the darkening space was the cleanness of the cold earth. How she loved it!

The light reddened up the sky, piercing with fierce arrows the leafless woods, tingeing the river with opal tints and dying away to leave a grey, austere world.

London was very full of misty colour and shadows shot with flaring lights and noise. Honor loved that too, she had no fear of it. Deep down in her heart she held the gift of the day and in her busy mind she began to weave the beautiful garment in which it was to be wrapt.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT GATEWAYS.

THE subtle power of suggestion no doubt operates far more easily on some natures than on others. Honor was an easier prey to its insidious dangers than most people. She would have stood up boldly and worsted any open attempt to separate her from her husband, or to demonstrate as to their incapacity to "make a good thing" of their marriage, but however much she tried to drive from her mind Andrea's inferences on the matter, the poison he instilled remained there and percolated, drop by drop, into her daily life.

It would have been in Anthony's power to supply a complete antidote to it, but unfortunately Anthony was unaware of its need, and withal, so conscious of his own need that he was at more than usual pains to eliminate all question of his own wishes with regard to Honor's movements.

When he returned after that Christmas in London, and when the advent of Honor's book was an accepted fact, he had faced very clearly the position between them, and found the damage and hurt to himself was not such as he wished to cry on the house-tops, for he was aware now that Honor did not love him in the measure that he loved her.

She loved him indeed, precisely as her warm, generous nature would love anyone who had been as kind to her as he had been and who had given her the things otherwise unobtainable, things material and immaterial; it was quite genuine heart-whole affection but it was the affection of a child.

That mature magic that belonged to her books was

something quite apart from herself. It was a reflection of that wisdom which lies at the back of some children, generally unrecognised and unuttered, but there, testifying to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, to the age of the soul. But it was not an integral part of Honor. All that she had of charm, joyousness, vitality and sincerity was apart from this, and it was the charm, the joyousness and sincerity of a child—a capable child, a devoted companion, a generous worshipper—but a child who would one day make a woman and it was of infinite importance, could Anthony but have known it, who should be beside her at that awakening.

But Anthony knew nothing about it. He only knew that he loved her in a deeper and different manner than she loved him, and because he had originally attempted to buy that love of her (he saw it in that light now), he feared to make demands on a nature whose very generosity presented its greatest danger.

She would refuse him nothing he asked. He knew it and was greedy for the free gift of her love. Could he have gone to her with empty hands and said: "I have done and can do nothing for you, I have spoiled your career but I love you and I want you," it would have been well. But all that he had done and was able to do for hers and for her—even materially—tied his hands. She accepted these things of him with the trust and confidence of a child. Beyond that he knew and she knew that this little burst of achievement and fame had come to her through the widened windows of her experience. He had helped her as he had promised to do—and she would refuse him nothing because of that!

So when Honor wrote him a letter telling him of that wonderful gift of the April day and how great a thing it meant to her, and how she wanted to do all in her power to be just to it, and how it seemed

to her that she must live for a time in the quiet English country to get at home with her idea, and said it all with complete faith in his understanding and his desire to help her, he was left no loophole for escape.

He had been desperately busy at the time her letter reached him, and he had passed a bad two days with the words of it staring him in the face between every detail of his daily routine. Then he had sat down and written her a letter that the next morning had struck him as a mere criminal piece of selfishness as well as a piece of unmitigated folly. For what profit would it be for her to come here to him, when what she wanted herself was to stay in England and write?

In the letter Honor did receive he told her to settle what part of England was most suitable for her purpose, and to look for a house of her liking and then he would come back home and settle her into it in May. How could he do less, who had loved her first as a writer, afterwards as a woman, less than to hold to the very letter of his agreement with her?

"Gateways, Sandsted," was the outcome of a mere chance, a tea-party, a restless tenant, and Honor's determination to carry out Anthony's instructions as the best means of pleasing him and proving her appreciation of them.

Sandsted was on the sea remote from rail and town, and Gateways stood at the head of the little village under the shelter of a pine-clad hill. Bare downs rolled away from it on the one side, and on the other, stretched a great purple moorland fringed with water, with marsh and sandy flats, over which the tide crept with stealthy feet behind the low, long barrier of sand lying between it and the open sea.

Gateways was built of grey stone and it had been built for an artist who understood at any rate the art of living. It was small, it had a perfect little garden,

it was beautiful and it was still more beautiful when Anthony had made it ready for his "Author."

He told her—and she supported him in the belief—that it would form a charming *pied à terre* until Wallingford was ready for them and they for Wallingford. Also that it would be much better to spend the summer here than in Italy, where she could join him in the autumn if she liked; but though this latter point was certainly mentioned Anthony did not dwell upon it. Honor had been as delighted as a child with a new toy over the viewing of the house, the correspondence, the showing it to Anthony and the settling in. She was positive she could write there. Its charms were of a different order from the Villa Guardini. There was nothing somnolent about them. They were bracing; the down lands on the one side lent austerity to the place, the wide moor on the other carried a certain savage force which made for productiveness. If that were what Anthony wanted of her she both would and could fulfil his wishes.

Yet there remained a little suspicion in her heart that it would have been a still greater pleasure to throw pen and ink to the winds and fly back like a homing pigeon to Italy, to darn his socks and order his dinners! She gave a curious little, choking laugh as she quoted Andrea to herself. This was on her first solitary evening at Gateways. Anthony had left, summoned back to work by an imperious need and Sara, who was to keep her company, was not arriving till the next day.

This momentary desire for Italy and all implied came to her with the force of a great temptation. She at least recognised it as such, as a weakness, a shirking of something that had been given her to do. It would be base ingratitude, most heinous of sins in her eyes, to Anthony.

"He wants me to succeed—he believes I can. Oh, I

will, I will," she said to herself, twisting her hands together forlornly, as she stood at the window looking out over the distant dancing waters of the bay.

Gateways, built for an artist as aforesaid, contained as a third living room a studio. Indeed, the room might be said to constitute half the house. Honor had at once mentioned the convenience of it—for Andrea. Anthony could hardly have been said to jump at the suggestion.

"I don't think Andrea cares for the country," he said hesitatingly.

"No, he doesn't, that's why he's so cross at my settling here," she answered frankly. "He thinks I might as well be buried alive."

Honor, in fact, had carried out her arrangements in the teeth of Andrea's open opposition. It had, however, been open and plainly expressed and she "stood up" to it laughing, and held to her own way.

In his heart Andrea confessed it was at least not so bad as Italy and held to the comforting belief she would soon be tired of it.

Lawrence's approval had been as unqualified as his father's disapproval, but he did not express it except shyly to Honor, when she showed him round her new territory as her first guest. She had over-riden all Andrea's selfish protests as to the inconvenience of Lawrence's absence, and insisted on his spending the hot summer months with her at Gateways, while Andrea idled his time away on a series of visits. It is quite uncertain if even Honor would have gained her point in this if it had not been that Andrea suddenly discerned something to suit his ends in Lawrence's presence there, and gave in with pretended reluctance to Honor's plea.

There was, however, one other person who shared Andrea's first dislike to the notion of Gateways and

Honor's country sojourn, though from very different motives. That was Alice.

She remarked, when told of the plan, that she supposed Anthony and Honor knew their own business best, which meant she thought exactly the reverse. Her outlook on the world, never very luminous with colour, had continued to hold a faint suspicion of rose-colour to which she had persistently clung. She had had a desire—a hungry, even passionate desire, to believe in life as Honor saw it, and portrayed it, and to be assured that it was due to some constitutional error in herself, some mental defect of vision that dulled her view to its real value and beauty. Honor's marriage had seemed to her precisely what should be the outcome of Honor's faith and Honor's world. It contained just that element of romance and possibility of happiness that she so passionately desired to believe the rightful heritage of man and woman, and yet, here within a year, Anthony and Honor were living at opposite ends of the world, so to speak, as if love were of as little moment in actual life as the world in general believed. True, they had not quarrelled—so far as she knew—that made it all the worse. Even without that, with everything in its favour, it seemed that this Love could not make more of a success of matrimony than drab-coloured commonsense might do—less, may be.

So Honor set herself down at Gateways, at the instigation of that master passion for production in the first place, but none the less certainly because it yielded to it rather than to her heart's promptings she believed she was best fulfilling the will of one who had never been less than generously "good" to her.

And Anthony continued the life which had been so suddenly filled and so suddenly emptied of joy for him, because he believed his honour was involved in the question of his wife's literary success and because

he was too generous or too proud to take from her in gratitude what he craved as a free gift of love.

It was September. The royal purple of the heather across the moor was shot with brown and red. In the little copses and narrow belts of wood the trees showed a golden fringe. The bare downs had a brown, dry aspect after their summer's baking; and in the woods the tawny bracken bent towards the earth that should so soon receive it again.

Honor sat at her writing table by the studio window, examining a new die impressed on her note paper.

"Gateways, Sansted."

She was not quite certain whether it satisfied her or not. It was plain and neat, but it might have been slightly heavier, she thought. She would ask Andrea on Sunday. She still found it difficult to make up her mind on absurd little points like this and it annoyed her, bringing to her consciousness a sense of inexperience and dependence that otherwise she contrived to forget.

An unfinished letter to Anthony lay before her and, having cogitated over the paper she took up her pen irresolutely and then straightway laid it down again.

It was lovely out of doors in the warm September sunshine, there might not be many more such days; it was really a sin to waste it in writing letters and she had written last week. Moreover, Lawrence was somewhere in the garden and he would be going back soon—and she had promised cook to shell the peas!

This last recollection struck her with the force of a duty. She put the letter into a corner and went out.

"Lawrence, Lawrence!" she called and he came to her from a little rose bower at the top of the garden—a dreamy, peaceful Lawrence.

"Have you finished your letter?"

"No, but I forgot, we must pick the peas and shell

them, for Melford has gone into Sandage. Come along, I'll race you to the end of the garden."

She did, and Lawrence pretended he was going to let her win, and then spurted past her, and turned and held out his arm, barrier-like, across the path, so she had to stop. They picked their peas and came back to the rose bower to shell them.

The peas behaved in their usual frivolous way, that is to say, they sprang out of their green prisons, evincing every desire to escape into the wide world when possible, rather than into the homely pudding basin designed for them. The pile of pods grew prodigiously in comparison with the meagre little allowance of green bullets in the basin. So they went back to gather more. Presently, in the midst of it, Lawrence stopped talking the nonsense which this morning seemed to have taken possession of him and said with half bated breath:

"Bertini says if all goes on well, I may possibly have a concert next spring."

"Oh, Lawrence, how lovely! A real concert to yourself?"

"Some one else too, of course. Perhaps Madame Zelic—she will do anything for Bertini—but Honor, it's a secret just at present, and anyhow, it's only *perhaps!*"

"Yes, I know. But afterwards? What then?"

"I never think about after. It would be like stepping through a curtain into a room one has never seen. But before that, I must play to people—to whoever he can get to listen—people who know."

"What are you going to play, when it really happens?"

"Brahms and Schumann."

"And—Lawrence Bradon?"

"Yes." He drew a quick breath.

"But certainly, 'Yes!' she responded gaily. "That's

enough peas, let's sit on the bank here and shell them. What thing of your own, Lawrence?"

She seated herself on the bank with the gathering in her lap and proceeded to finish her task, but Lawrence sat at her feet and did not help this time. He sat with his arms round his knees and stared up the narrow grass walk before him.

"Honor," he said slowly. "Do you know how it is when you can hear things absolutely clearly, when one realises at last there is no discord anywhere, once one has learnt the resolving note. When one sees that rules have to exist just because that note can never really be found—I don't mean the Dominant Fifth or anything technical like that, you know—"

Honor, who had only vague ideas as to what the "dominant fifth" meant, nodded her head sagely.

"I know—go on."

"It's a note," Lawrence obeyed her dreamily, "that we don't seem to have room for in our scale, but yet it does exist—just as colours must exist that we can't see, they are too fine for us, too beautiful—perhaps we can only get at them by combination—still, its there—that note, though I can't find it, I can only hear it."

He stopped.

The silence round them seemed to deepen, the birds stopped twittering, not a breath stirred among the aspen trees that bordered the fence. High noon rode overhead and the whole world was whispering its *Angelus*.

"When I am with you," Lawrence went on in tones so low they did not seem to break the silence; "I hear it quite clearly, it is the only thing I do hear. It fills all the world, everything rests on it, ends in it—and I want to stay near you always so as to hear it, and to feel it all through me—to my finger tips."

He spread out those delicate, wonderful hands of

his, palms upward and gazed at them with strange interest.

"Then I go away from you and try to put it down, and there's no room for it on the music paper, and no note for it on the piano—and I can only set down the want of it—the longing and the searching—and that all means—failure."

His voice died out and his head sank. Honor put out her hand and smoothed his hair softly, but she did not speak, she just understood.

Then he turned his face to her.

"You see," he added with an infinitely wistful little smile, "there's nothing lonely, incomplete, or sad in what I hear—that's what makes it so heartbreaking—to put down unhappy things when one hears the glorious gladness of it all."

He turned round and leaned his arms on her knees, kneeling at her feet.

"I think, Honor, if only I could be with you long enough I should be able to really find it and put it down. I don't know why—and I don't think you do either, it's just that it's in you. Do you feel like that yourself, Honor, with your books? I think you must because you understand so well. Do you feel you can never put down just what you want to say, though you have so many more words than I have notes?"

"My dear," said Honor with something of his wistfulness in her eyes; "I think it's always like that. None of us who have seen or heard or thought anything *real* can ever quite catch it. We all fail somewhere—even Andrea. If we were right outside of it all and could look at it as a whole together, perhaps it wouldn't seem such a failure."

But Lawrence put his head down on his hands.

"Honor!" he whispered hoarsely. "I don't want to fail, I want to find it, I must."

He knelt there at her feet, his face hidden in his

hands. All his strong young soul was aching and struggling with desire, passionate desire. Desire that pierced the need of material things, more rending, more destructive than mere primitive passion, which is but the threshold over which so many of the possible great ones stumble. It is given to the children of the kingdom to enter without stumbling, ignorant even of the very danger that surrounds them.

But Honor was also a child of that kingdom and had a child's respect for those she knew instinctively would enter further and climb higher than herself. She turned her hopes for him into faith and at that moment, could it have served to strengthen him, she would have beggared herself of her own creative faculty. Happily, since no soul can be truly helped by the spoliation of another, nothing was required of her but just that faith and sympathy which was the one food he needed and craved for.

A blackbird started whistling on an apple tree near, breaking the silence of the noonday with the sharp clearness of silver wire. Some faint "noiseless noise" sent the aspens quivering, and a big butterfly alighted on the grass near Honor.

"A butterfly," she whispered softly, and Lawrence raised his head and looked at it. It was poised there on the green grass, opening and shutting its wings, slowly, luxuriating in its power to feel that all-penetrating life-giving warmth and reflecting back those unnameable colours that it caught out of the white light of day.

They both watched it for some moments, and then blinking, shut their eyes.

When they looked again, it was gone.

Honor rose.

"We must take these peas in to cook," she declared. "I don't believe there are enough even now and it's ever so late."

Honor had meant to tell Lawrence that his father was coming on Saturday. She hardly knew why she refrained except that without words from him she was aware of a growing, deeper hostility in him towards Andrea, that differed from the old boyish hate of a tyrannical master.

Andrea had not seen Gateways at all so far, but Honor's several visits to London had invariably included a visit to the studio. During August, however, he had completely dropped out of sight, and she heard nothing of him for six weeks when he had written (it had been on the previous Tuesday) to ask if he might come down for the week end.

The truth was that, after a more exciting and more idle summer than usual, Andrea had decided he needed the medicine of Honor's presence to restore the clarity of his vision and that it would be absurd not to take advantage of his own "sacrifice" of Lawrence's presence in London, seeing that that had been made merely to ensure his right of entry into Gateway when such should be his desire. Lawrence and Sara (he imagined her there) would surely be chaperone enough to protect Honor from even village tongues.

Now it happened that Sara had gone up to town on the Monday and might, or might not, be back by the end of the week. Honor did not trouble herself over the matter one way or another, but when she broke the news of the expected visitor to Lawrence that evening after dinner, she was rather surprised that he took it so silently, and only asked after a pause, when Sara was coming back.

Honor said she didn't know; that Sara had gone to order dresses for her and that since their size happened to be the same—fortunately—and Honor regarded fittings as one of the evils of life while Sara regarded them as one of the privileges, she was to stay and be fitted for Honor.

"She's getting me a dinner dress and an afternoon dress," Honor told Lawrence; "just what she likes. I hope if she does come and brings the designs while Andrea is here, that they won't quarrel over them! Oh dear, I must finish that letter to Anthony. Don't play till I've done, Lawrence darling, or I'll have to come to you."

"I'll go out," he answered in an oddly constrained voice.

Honor nodded, sighed, and set herself resolutely to her task. The sooner it was done the sooner Lawrence could play to her. How good Anthony had been to Lawrence just as he was to her. Where would they both have been without him? Poor Lawrence! But perhaps Alice was right, it was better to have some difficulties. Poor Andrea, too! It was rather dreadful he was—well, that he was—Andrea. Still, she could not possibly have spared Lawrence from the magic circle of her life.

Lawrence went out from the garden into the rough green lane or track that wandered on round the pine-clad hill and out over the moor, where it lost itself. He went, however, no further than the shelter of the lane itself. It was silent, still and dark there. Behind him on the rise, the windows of Gateways twinkled like homely little stars of light. Further back in the village a dog was barking. Everything was very still and black under the shadow of the pines and only stars lightened the darkness in the open.

Lawrence went out from the garden into the rough tract or lane behind the garden, his hands thrust into his pockets, his head bent.

The peace which had been his for six glorious weeks was to be broken, and broken cruelly.

He had never contemplated the shadow of his father falling here. Gateways had meant a thousand blissful joys, the chief one that of being with Honor out

of reach of that shadow. Many matters that had been altogether missing from his life hitherto had become known to him: habits of thought—a sweet, gracious freedom of life, and a new content and under it the quaint childish gaiety which should have been part of his normal life became visible. Honor found his capacity for unhappiness was only equalled by his capacity for happiness. All this would for him be obliterated the moment his father's step crossed the threshold of Gateways, and once more he would be torn with that unnamed dread that possessed him now, when he saw Honor with his father and looked on at their easy, intimate friendship. It had become to him like watching a child playing with a snake that might for all he knew be poisonous. Lawrence could not watch it and keep his true mental balance or sense of proportion, nor could he reason about it. He only knew that was how he felt.

And Sara would not be here. He felt certain of it. Lawrence knew very little about conventional rules, yet his mind groped for them, to set as barriers round Honor, dimly conscious they were meant for safeguards and protections—against what? He could not put his fear into words any more than he could have told her of it, or begged her to send for Sara, but as he puzzled over it he struck suddenly on the idea that it was not Sara but Alice who would best satisfy his curious uneasiness. He could not formulate to himself the "why" of this either, but the thought was there, so strong and compelling that he went straight indoors and up to his room without disturbing Honor, and sat down to write to Alice.

"Gateways, Sansted.

"My dear Alice:

"Could you come down for the week end instead of Sara? My father is coming and I am sure you would look after things better than Sara would. I

expect Honor does not like to bother you. I have not told her I am writing. Your sincerely,

"Lawrence.

"P.S. Please come, it's important."

He sealed it and slipped out again down the front drive to the post office. There would be no post out now till the morning, but that did not trouble him; the letter was written and gone, and could not be recalled.

Honor had just finished her letter when he came in.

"May I play now?" he asked, stopping at the door a moment to watch her.

"Please, yes," she nodded, smiling, but he came over to her instead.

There was a photograph of Anthony on the writing table before her. Honor, having addressed her letter, held it up to the photo.

"Yes, that's all for you—four sheets! Shouldn't he be pleased, Lawrence?"

She looked up at him gaily and caught his adoring eyes that held something new in them to-night, something protective and anxious. She put her hand over his as it rested on the table.

"Nice boy! Come and play to me."

"When is he coming back?" He indicated the photograph.

Honor leaned her chin on her hands and regarded it.

"I don't know, Lawrence. He is very busy. I mustn't get in his way, you know. It's all too big—what he's doing—for that."

"You would be in no one's way, anywhere."

She shook her head.

"I am doing what he wants me to do, here."

Still Lawrence looked dissatisfied.

"He is very nice, Honor, I don't know any other man who is so nice."

"He's good," said Honor slowly, and a little wistfully. "He's the 'goodest' man I have ever imagined. It will be lovely when we can be at Wallingford together. Having to do things is a bother."

She sighed with quite genuine appreciation of the fact.

could not honestly own his father's presence cast quite so black a shadow over the life at Gateways, as he had expected. Perhaps it was that he handed over his self-imposed responsibilities to Alice, or her staid presence afforded him moral support; certainly, Andrea's mood was such that intentionally or unintentionally he pleased all three of them, ingratiated himself with two or three paintable natives and secured the consent of the rector to sketch the interior of the old Norman church. The result of this last achievement was that on Monday afternoon the rector and his wife came to call, and Andrea had the delicious pleasure of seeing Honor on her best society behaviour, quite plainly (to him) terrified of her guests and equally plainly (to him) exerting herself to be extremely kind to them, a proceeding which completely swamped their own well-meant effort to be "nice" and cordial to this unsatisfactory neighbour, who—in three months—had only appeared four times in church, and had evidently no intention of applying for a sitting.

For Mrs. Bradon's fame as "Honor Passfield" had not penetrated here, at least, not so far as the ears of the rector and his wife. The influx of summer visitors had certainly brought those who betrayed great interest in the nearly invisible lady of Gateways, but the sober-minded inhabitants put it all down to the odd ways and notions of the "foreigners," fads and notions which, of course, must be humoured so long as they remained amongst them, but need not be kept in mind once the lucrative but invading force returned to its own far distant haunts.

Andrea Bradon, however, was different. Even the rector and his wife knew of him and had even seen his pictures. The rector indeed was distressed that he had not known to whom he had been speaking on Sunday afternoon, when he so graciously gave permission for the sketching of the church. It was his

wife who had enlightened him. Mathews, their gardener, had a cousin who was helper up at Gateways, and the cook there had told him that it was the "artist gentleman," who was coming.

This determined the Radmans to call on Monday, though previously they had felt it was hardly worth doing, if Mrs. Bradon was so little interested in the welfare of the village and her own soul.

They had been shown correctly into the pretty drawing room, and Honor had come to them there, obviously nervous and anxious to suggest a change. She asked if they would mind taking tea in the studio, as the rest of her party were there and, on their expressing their pleasure, led the way through to that room with cheerful alacrity. Once supported by friends Honor did the duties of hostess with remarkable success and at least caused Andrea, as before related, the liveliest satisfaction.

Mr. Radman at once expressed the hope that the neighbourhood would tempt Mr. Bradon to take a house there.

Andrea told him he had seriously thought of building a house, whereat Honor and Lawrence swiftly exchanged glances. If Andrea were in this mood, it behooved them to be on their guard.

"The objection for me is," Andrea went on, somewhat mournfully, "that there is no church near. I am a Catholic, you see."

Lawrence hastily handed the cake basket to the rector hoping he might not follow this up.

But the rector gave a courteous inclination of the head, and ejaculated:

"Ah, yes, yes, just so. The nearest church for you would be five miles away."

"So near as that? It would not be an insurmountable difficulty then," returned Andrea, much interested. "Do you know the priest there?"

Mr. Radman had not that pleasure personally, but the rector of a neighbouring parish knew him quite well.

"A broad-minded, cultivated man," pronounced Mr. Radman. "If England were to be supplied with many such, we should have to look to our laurels here," he smiled tolerantly at his own little joke.

"There are a great many of the old faith still in England," Andrea said gravely. "I think myself, it will always maintain firm hold on those of us who are keenly susceptible of beauty."

"It's refreshing to meet faith of any kind in these days," the good rector sighed profoundly; "so many are indifferent."

"One sees it," murmured Andrea sympathetically; "in life, in society, in art—deplorable."

"I suppose," put in Mrs. Radman, absently helping herself to a piece of cake, "it is because you are a Catholic that you paint so many pictures of saints?"

An introspective look crept into Andrea's eyes.

A very much cleverer person than Mrs. Radman might have been misled into imagining his thoughts were lingering over sacred memories.

"It is in childhood our mind and tastes are really moulded," he said, in rather a low, feeling voice; "we may account those happy who are brought up amidst high ideals."

It would have been impossible to say he really looked at Lawrence, yet Mrs. Radman felt her glance impelled that way, and wondered at the very singular expression on the boy's face.

"Your mother was Italian, I believe, and a Catholic?" remarked Mr. Radman, with rather heavy sympathy.

(He believed it because he had read it in "Who's Who" that morning.)

Andrea admitted as much and added with a most kind smile at Mrs. Radman:

"You see how true were your intuitions."

Honor bent over the tea-table to hide her almost irresistible desire to laugh; she had been afraid to interfere lest worse should befall. It was Alice who came at last to the rescue.

"Church or no church," she said severely to Andrea, "you would not be able to build here. Honor tells me land cannot be bought."

Andrea owned meekly that did make another difficulty, and they fell to discussing landlords.

When the Radmans left, they carried away with them a most pleasing impression of the great Bradon. Mrs. Radman at once purchased photographs of all his most saintly pictures and Mr. Radman was wont to speak of him as one of the few great living artists who were truly and seriously religious—though a Roman!

After the guests had gone, Alice turned to Andrea and said:

"That's the first time I've heard anything about your being a Catholic, Andrea."

"But it's true, or at least, it ought to be true," he protested pathetically. "I am almost certain my mother was a Catholic, and I have a distinct liking for the smell of incense, so that seems conclusive."

"You are incorrigible," Honor put in quickly. "Anyhow, why need you tell them?"

"Just to give the poor man a chance. He seemed such an enlightened old beggar, and you wouldn't let him behave kindly to you."

"What do you mean?" she sighed.

"Why, my dear child, they were both dying to be so nice and broadminded towards you. I don't expect you to go to church, do you?—and you took the game into your own hands and were charmingly kind and affable to them."

"I wasn't!" cried Honor, flushing up.

She put down her cup and got up, looking at them all three with rather defiant eyes.

"It's my house anyhow," she said, "and you behaved scandalously.

But Andrea only laughed at her and insisted he was sorry for them.

It was worthy of note that Honor made no appeal to either of the others to support her own contention.

Andrea's week end extended into two unsevered ends and Alice betrayed amazing little anxiety as to the family at home, though she had never before left it so long to its fate, or, if she was worried, she confided it to no one, not even Lawrence. But she refused to take over the housekeeping from Honor as Sara had done.

"You are not working now," she said; "and I am having a holiday. If you ask people to see you, you must look after their comforts."

Which was, of course, true, but it meant that one guest had to entertain himself for part of the day, and inwardly resented it.

He had, however, far too acute sense of his own advantage to complain openly, and so far as Alice could judge, if she were disposed to sum up the situation at all, Andrea was glad of free mornings to stroll in the village and make a few desultory sketches, and equally charmed that she should be in a similar need of being shown the beauties of the neighbourhood with himself. It took him about six hours to find out the fact that Alice had assumed the rôle of guardian angel to the unconscious Honor, and one reason for his prolonged stay under the circumstances was to discover at whose instigation other than her own she so acted. It was not Honor; that much he readily discerned. It was true Alice's presence might be accidental and her discretion purely sisterly care, but he

gauged Alice fairly well, and he did not believe she was entirely unprompted. Therefore it was a matter of some moment to Andrea to discover who the prompter might be. The only ones that suggested themselves were, in order of their possibility, Sara, Lawrence, or Anthony.

He entertained no hostility towards Alice. He had a certain respect for her, considered her a good sort and had a wholesome admiration for her blunt, direct ways so long as they did not interfere with his pleasure. Had he desired himself to find a dragon to guard Honor from unwelcome intruders, he felt he could not have chosen better. Still, there had been no question till now of Honor's right and freedom to come and go, to know whom she would and visit whom she would. The wide lines of conduct admitted as allowable by the rather Bohemian Passfield household did not necessitate such strict regard to convention at Alice's present conduct seemed to imply. He twice took Alice for long walks himself, and had the satisfaction of knowing she came back less antagonistic than she set out; but by the end of the week he felt he had made concessions enough to public opinion, and decided to go on his own way.

It had been a particularly hot day. None of them had ventured out of the garden. They had finished tea and Honor, silent and *distract*, went over to the window, and leant out to scent up the sweetness of the mignonette that grew just outside.

"Take me out for a walk on the moor," said Andrea's low voice behind her. She glanced round. Alice had gone away to write letters, Lawrence was apparently engrossed in a book.

Honor was tired and, left to herself, would certainly not have chosen to go for a walk. But Andrea had not consulted her inclinations, he had commandeered her company; his eyes, looking straight into hers,

smiled as if it amused him to see her hesitate. She forgot she had any particular will of her own.

Still she moved rather slowly away.

"Well, not very far," she protested.

"As far as the sunset," he persisted laughing.

She went out to get her hat still slowly, but humming a little air.

As she passed his chair Lawrence, who had been less absorbed in his book than his looks warranted, spoke to her in a low voice without looking up.

"Why do you go if you are tired, Honor?"

"Because—because—he wants me to,"

She too spoke low, but she smiled.

There was not the shadow of an answering smile on Lawrence's face, however.

"Have you no wants of your own?"

She shook her head and went on.

Andrea, who had seated himself in the window seat, watched them curiously. He continued to watch Lawrence when Honor had gone, partly because he knew Lawrence hated to be watched and partly because it interested him.

Presently he spoke in a gentle voice conveying both enquiry and reproach.

"Wasn't that a little selfish of you, Lawrence? I'm only asking for information, mind; I don't pretend to understand these moral questions but after all you have had a good long innings yourself, you know."

Lawrence put down the book he was reading and looked his father straight in the face.

"There is no question of talking about an innings with Honor," he said firmly. "But as to selfishness, it's quite obvious that she is tired."

He resumed his book and Andrea, with his hands in his pockets, continued to regard him with much amusement.

"Observation used not to be your strong point," he

remarked thoughtfully; "but it's a virtue worth cultivating. Let me assure you, Honor will come back less tired than when she started."

And he went out to the hall where his quick ears had caught the sound of her step.

They went out into the green lane where Lawrence had walked so concernedly a few nights previously, passed the pine wood and so out on the moor. The heather, rusty and brown near at hand, still held a purple haze in wide stretches, giving that strangely mournful aspect to the country that only heather can give. The two climbed to the top of the first hill and stood there looking out at it all, the wide, wide country, melting eastward into distant jagged hills, the sandy fringes of the great creek, the narrowing strip of sand that stood as a frail barrier between land and sea, and behind them the village, embowered in the trees nestling under the shoulder of the downs.

Away to the west behind the stretch of moor and water the sun was gathering luminous clouds round him, there would be no watching him fall—a ball of fire—down to the other world to-night; but the orange and rose that are his evening livery spread like broken opal over the sky and earth.

Honor took off her hat and brushed back her hair, sighing. A need for which she had not found a name filled her heart. She sat down on a ledge that they called the sunset seat and Andrea sat beside her.

"It is almost as it was in Italy," she said in a low voice; "too beautiful."

"Yes." Her eyes looked puzzled. "I wonder why, for it is just as lovely. It does not send you to sleep though I don't know what is missing."

Andrea knew very well, but had no intention of enlightening her. He moved a little so that he could better watch her face.

"I shall finish off the St. Theresa directly I get

back," he told her with deliberate egoism. "Ashman's are to have it on show and then it goes. It's sickening—if I want to see it I shall have to go to Spain."

"Why do you let it go if you want it here?"

He looked his genuine amazement at her non-comprehension of such a point.

"I painted it for them, for a particular place, for a particular light. It won't look right anywhere else."

She in her turn considered him gravely.

"I believe, Andrea, that you would far rather be unfair to a human being than to one of your own pictures."

He took out a cigarette and lit it.

"Naturally I would—they are mine, people are not."

"Lawrence is."

"Lawrence!" He laughed. "Lawrence, like other people, can look after himself, my pictures—" he paused, and she was conscious of a subtle change in him—"well, they are mine, I made them, stroke by stroke—they are my own thoughts—myself—wholly myself—*me*."

His hand clenched and unclenched. His eyes were fixed on a bush of faded heather; just for one second the man was caught out of his own over-conscious self and Honor held her breath with amazement. She had never seen him so in all their days of friendship. It was a revelation of an egotism as complete as that of the mother who sets the centre of her life in the existence of her child, because it is *hers*.

It was all momentary, however. Andrea returned to his normal self in the next breath.

"What has Lawrence to complain about?"

"He complains of nothing, I was only thinking."

"Think of something more profitable."

He paused just long enough to rob his next remark of any appearance of triviality. "How is the book going?"

"I am almost afraid still," she owned reluctantly. "It would be so terrible to spoil it."

"Give it time—even if you write something else meanwhile."

"I can't, Andrea. I have begun!" She spoke hurriedly and low. "I have been writing in the early mornings when I wake, with it all clear in my mind before it gets rubbed out. That's why I'm tired."

"I knew that."

"How could you know?"

"I've seen you before when you've just finished writing—you are always a little cross, you know," he added teasingly. It was not the least what he meant.

"I'm not."

"Yes, you are," he insisted firmly. "Just a little. So you ought to be. You've been using up force and haven't enough patience left for the dull daily round till you've eaten eggs and bacon."

"Horrid person!" But her mouth dimpled into a smile.

"When are you coming back to London?"

"It depends on Anthony."

"That's not re-assuring. I thought nothing but sick people and flies depended on Anthony."

"I'm hoping he'll come over next month," she said steadily.

"Has he mentioned it definitely?"

She was silent.

"Well, he's done his best for you anyhow, Honor—settling you here; you ought to give him good return, you know."

Honor kept her face turned to the growing glory of the sunset. There was a little mist before her eyes; that curious, undefined desire at her heart hurt again. She wanted to go back that very moment and write to make haste with that return she must make to Anthony, who was so good to her.

"I shall have to go back on Monday," ^{drum}Anthony said abruptly; "but I don't want to go, Honor. I want to stay here and paint you as the Lady of the Moor, but I suppose even if I could manage it, Alice couldn't stay?"

"Alice?" she enquired with a puzzled face.

"Mrs. Bradon must have an adequate chaperone."

"What nonsense! I thought you asked her here on purpose. She just happened to come; as a matter of fact, I did not even expect Sara would be back."

"My dear child," he protested gravely. "It would have been most improper. We aren't living in St. John's Wood now, you know! I suppose Alice heard and valiantly came to the rescue of *les convenances*."

"I think you are very silly," she declared rather impatiently. "Alice did nothing of the kind. She did not know you were coming till she arrived. I only mentioned it to Lawrence on Wednesday."

"Who, no doubt, displayed proper pleasure," he remarked a little drily.

Honor considered a moment.

"He asked when Sara was coming back. I think he was nearly as silly as you."

"It's the result of proper bringing up, not silliness."

There was a little hard note of satisfaction in his voice. He had accounted quite correctly for Alice's presence to his own mind now.

"By the way, I fear I must take Lawrence back with me. It's good of you to have put up with him so long."

"Don't be absurd. Why should he go?"

"First, I want him. There are never any matches to be found, and I can't get decent coffee. Secondly, I want to finish a sketch of Stronar of the Isles, and if he stays here any longer he will get too fat. Thirdly—well—I want him."

"Three reasons which might be condensed into one,"

she retorted indignantly. "If I let him go, it will be because Bertini will be back and will want him."

"Ah yes. I forgot that reason. Bertini wants him too."

"It would never have occurred to you."

"Frankly—no. It's not my business."

She rose and looked her last at the western sky. There was the suggestion of a frown on her face.

"I'm going home."

"Honor."

He stood up too, between her and the homeward path.

"Honor, you are vexed with me. What's amiss?"

She had quarrelled with him often, parted from him in anger, told him plain truths, but he had never before done more than laugh at her. She felt vaguely alarmed and at fault, for after all what had he said new or unexpected that should trouble her?

"I am not angry," she told him doubtingly. "Only somehow—" her words were halting and uncertain, "though I know you are selfish—I don't like—don't like you taking it yourself, as a matter of course."

"Would you have me assume a virtue? I am as I am made, Honor, neither worse nor better than you've always known me. I don't mind your flashing out at me, or being angry, but I am not going to let you harbour little hard thoughts, they grow dangerous. Lawrence is nothing to either of us. Don't let him stand between you and your—friends, Honor."

She was baffled by his insistence. She had not known it was true what he said. Yet it was, she recognised it. She had lately taken mental judgment of him.

"I am fond of Lawrence," she said quickly; "but it's never made us less friends, Andrea. I own sometimes I think badly of you. And then—"

"Go on," he insisted quietly, his eyes fixed on her.

"Then I think of your pictures—and I know I don't really understand *you*. It's not my business to judge."

"And it's mine to paint."

She nodded.

"And you do it."

"You forgive me because of my pictures then?"

"I realise I don't know what there is to forgive, not really."

"Thank you." There was a veiled triumph in his voice. Nothing she could have said could have conveyed such subtle flattery to him, who was really above flattery except when it ministered, as this did, to the power of his master passion. A tribute to his work as apart from himself worked miracles on his mind. Lawrence was forgiven now, for the moment, because of Honor's words.

They went back good friends and he talked his best, and Honor forgot she was tired, and proposed a walk on the shore after dinner as proof thereof. Andrea watched Lawrence's rather reluctant acceptance of that proposal with amusement.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF ACHIEVEMENT.

"DR. GIRALDI is coming on Monday for the night, Leonello."

Anthony made the announcement with a calmness that poorly became the importance of the occasion in his assistant's mind. His quick, dark eyes darted swiftly round the spotless laboratory taking stock of all it would be necessary to do, in his estimation, to make it meet for the arrival of the great man.

"We shall convince him, sir," said Leonello confidently, his glance returning to his beloved chief.

Anthony smiled at him rather wearily.

"If we do it will shorten our time here. Will you be sorry when it's all complete?"

The young man straightened some covered glass trays with great care.

"There will always be plenty of other things—not complete," he suggested respectfully.

"Plenty of things, no doubt." Anthony got up and pushed aside a pile of papers. He looked thinner and older than when he had been at Gateways in the spring. The summer months had been usually hot and trying in Italy and had given him reason to rejoice that Honor was not sharing the discomfort of them.

"How many patients have we in the hospital now?" he asked.

"Two!"

Leonello got a little red. He took the empty state of the hospital much to heart.

Its emptiness was not due to lack of suitable patients in the district, but since Mrs. Bradon's departure nearly a year ago, it had been difficult to induce even the most desperate cases to cross its threshold.

Since then, too, that curiously unfriendly attitude of the villagers, which had weighed rather heavily on Anthony the previous winter, had become a familiar feature in life and he was hurt to the heart over it, and puzzled too. Until the wonderful year of Honor's advent, when pellagra had momentarily loosed its grip over victims, Anthony had most assuredly had the confidence and affection of these peasants and had been treated as a trusty friend, and no stranger in their midst. But in the last year all that had changed. Now, where here had been interest there was hostility, where there had been friendship was enmity. He had shut his eyes to it at first, tried to believe it just the wandering interest of children, but as the months passed that became impossible. He did his best to ignore it and continue towards them as of old, but the change was there—and it grew. They were not openly rude, they were even rather punctiliously polite, but they made it clear they did not want him and resented his presence amongst them. Anthony never spoke of it even to Leonello, but to-night it occupied both their minds and both of them were aware of the other's thought.

Suddenly Leonello broke out into hot speech that had been burning in his mind for days.

"It's that black priest that is at the bottom of it, sir," he declared fiercely, without apology or preamble. "I swear I can trace his finger in it times without number. He's laid a ban on the hospital, he's a reactionary, an enemy, an accursed ecclesiastic!"

Anthony, passing him, laid his hand on his arm.

"My dear fellow, there's not the slightest proof

that he's against us. He's always civil and interested, even."

"He's not a friend of yours as Father Ambrose was."

"They are a different stamp of man. In any case, Leonello, it's no use complaining. We are not popular any more and we must put up with it. It is not worth changing quarters at this hour. We have our observation cases and that must suffice." Silence fell between them again. Anthony took a desultory look at some odd growths in a sealed bottle.

Leonello looked at him furtively. Certainly the Signor Bradon was growing greyer. Leonello made a dash for courage.

"If the signora could come back," he said in a low hurried voice. He stopped irresolute.

"The signora cannot come back just at present," said Anthony quietly. "I shan't work any more to-night, Leonello; lock up, will you?"

He went away slowly to his own sitting-room which adjoined the laboratory.

His assistant looked after him with very real concern, and shook his head mournfully. There was much he would have liked to say on the subject of the signora, but also there were certain subjects on which the *maestro* was unapproachable.

Dr. Giraldi's visit to the Villa Guardini was something of the nature of a triumph to its inhabitants. He was not only the official head of the Government Research Department, but his name was respected throughout Europe as one of the soundest and most profound scientists of the day. If his influence could be flung on the side of Anthony's work in the conflict which was bound to ensue when he gave his theory to the world, both the bitterness and the time of the struggle would be shortened. Anthony's part of the work was nearly finished. The eight years of unceasing interest, of struggle and disappointment, of en-

lightenment and fulfilment, were about to receive their reward. It remained now for him to sift and sort out the enormous mass of proof and evidence he had collected and to present it to the world as the positive corroboration of the theory he had held in defiance of all accepted creeds.

Eight years—minus three months. He reckoned it up carefully. Eight years of his life given to wresting this secret from the stubborn hands of nature. Eight years of incessant care and toil, with the exception of one strange interlude that shot rainbow colours across its flying months, and left these later days barren and grey. He told himself it was an interlude that had no place there in the middle of such work, yet most assuredly he wanted it to have a place in his life. He did not allow himself to think of these things often. His way was to work away at the amazing mass of notes until he was tired enough to sleep. To-night the thought of the coming visitor upset the orderly sequence of his mind.

He had not known that Leonello had taken the curious antagonism of the peasants so much to heart. There was no need to trouble seriously. They had their observation cases, as he had reminded Leonello, and he could count a dozen friends still amongst the people. Yet it was true a year or so ago, he could count a dozen dozen. . . . It was a pity they would not come to the hospital now. There was at least alleviation there and he liked to help them.

Dr. Piccardi had gone to take over the charge of the new serum department in the hospital at Brescia. It had been a good appointment for the doctor and Anthony had helped him to it; but he missed him sorely. There were few educated men in the neighbourhood and the new doctor—like the new priest—was polite and not friendly.

The great doctor came; suave, complimentary, and

sceptical. It was too much to say he was hostile to Signor Bradon, but he made it clear he would require very strong evidence indeed, before he lent the dignity of his name, and incidentally the support of the Government to this wild theory. That, however, was how it should be. He would have been of no service to Anthony otherwise. He was shown the laboratory, the experiments going on, the nearly empty hospital, and such of the records and notes as Anthony chose to show him.

He asked few questions, but those he did went to the heart of the matter. His slow and rather ponderous voice seemed to lend weight to his lightest utterances. Leonello, hovering as near as respect and politeness would let him, had his hopes raised and dashed a dozen times in the course of an hour or two.

Minute by minute, however, had Anthony or Leonello guessed it, Dr. Giraldi's previous opinion of the "English savant" changed. Hitherto he had loomed in his eyes—despite his reputation—as something of an amateur, and the thoroughness of the work done in the Villa laboratory amazed him. Here was nothing he had been in the habit of connecting with the work of amateurs, no saving of time at the expense of thoroughness, no subordination of facts to theories, no trifling neglects that may cover such devastating results. It was all after his own heart, and when at last Anthony laid before him some of those minutely kept records, he could contain himself no longer. He put down the books, turned to Anthony who was standing by him, and seized his hands.

"But you are a true *confrère*, and I congratulate myself it is the need of my country that has attracted you. It will be a lasting honour to Italy that the name of Bradon should be connected with her."

Anthony said quietly he was glad Dr. Giraldi was satisfied.

The two men dined together in the vaulted dining room. The night was hot and the windows were wide open. Across the plain the lights of Brescia twinkled in the bosom of the great space, and little draggled trails of mist blurred them now and again. They had avoided the topic of the day by mutual consent during dinner, but as they sat over their coffee and fruit, a silence fell between them.

The doctor sat viewing his host with half shut eyes; every now and then he drew his fat fore-finger up and down his chin meditatively.

"Would you mind telling me how long ago it is since you first became interested in pellagra?" he asked slowly.

"It's eight years. I bought the Villa of my cousin. I found the serum about six years ago" (the doctor nodded), I had got on a wrong track; and it brought me to that."

"It's a result that would have contented most people, sir."

"It was not what I set out to find or to do."

There was again a brief silence. The man who found so little to say of a career already so noteworthy as Signor Bradon's, commanded respect from Giraldi, who was no mean judge of character.

"Whatever your proofs may be," he said at last, "we shall be ready to give you a hearing as soon as you are ready. If they are as complete as they appear, then the honour and glory of a great discovery is yours, and you have a great career before you."

"I am content to have been a pioneer," Anthony told him. He paused then for a moment before remarking hurriedly. "The sooner I can hand over the work to more competent hands the better I shall be pleased, Dr. Giraldi."

"You intend to forsake it?"

His voice was incredulous.

"There are better men than myself to carry it on. And I did not originally propose to give the whole of my life to it, or even to investigation."

"Ah, pardon me," cried the doctor brusquely, sweeping plates and glasses out of his way, and leaning forward over the table. His finger tips left white marks on his fat hands where he pressed them together, his eyes shone behind his glasses with fierce intentness. "Pardon me, but that cannot be—with you! Believe me, I know; you are of the elect—the born investigator. I see it in you. You have laboured over this thing eight years. Why? Because it was your duty, your livelihood, your interest, for your own people? I say no, but because you could not help yourself, it was in you to do it once you began! In you to understand matters not understood, to come to deadlocks with the secret things of nature and to beat her. This that you have done is your own deed. Step by step, you have advanced and made it yours, and you are within an ace of winning! You *will* win. And you talk of calmly handing it over to another, but you will not. Oh, it's not that you *will* not, it is that you *can* not. Yes, you will find that so. You will give it up perhaps, but only to begin again somewhere else. You do not recognise the power of the passion of investigation, sir. Science is a tyrannical mistress. She has found a good servant in you and she will not let you go. It will be no use to talk to her of another kind of life now. I too, who have followed after her—I tell you, you will never be free. She will have no less than the life of a man. You will not escape—none of us escape whom she has chosen."

There was a ring of tragic passion in his voice. He shook his podgy finger at his host warningly, readjusted his glasses, and drank up the remains of a glass of iced water at a gulp.

"We shall be ready to hear you when you are ready

to speak to us," he said with an air of finality, ignoring his own strange outburst.

As that was the main reason for his visit at Guardini, Anthony had every reason to be satisfied. He knew when they parted for the night that he had secured at least one new partisan whose word would go far in his favour.

Anthony found himself disinclined to sleep. He was excited, for it had been a momentous day with him, also he was aware of some vague uneasiness connected with that curious little outbreak after dinner. He lit a pipe and went out into the garden, as was occasionally his custom, before turning in.

The moon made alternate masses of light and shade on the steep inclines, the scent of the night hung heavy on the still air. Very shortly those cloud-like mists drifting over the plain would spread and grow, and sweep up to the foot of the mountains, then there would be no more evenings out of doors, or even outside the deserted salon. What truth was there in the great doctor's fierce words? Anthony did not mean them to be true. He had never felt so sure of that as he was to-night, when he stood, as it were, on the threshold of achievement.

Eight years here at this one compelling thing! And how many years before had he given to the chief passion of his life?

Ten years—eighteen altogether then—with short interludes. He did not grudge them. It had been of his choice, and he knew it was a good choice. He thought still with gratitude of the man who had directed his steps when his father's death left him at twenty-two, master of his own time, with money and leisure, a strong bias in one direction, and no special duty in the world to claim him.

"Don't play with your hobby," Charles Aston had said. "It's too noble a one for a dilettante's pleasure."

He had not played with it. He had worked. He thought of all the joy of those early years of hot endeavour, and of the three eventful years in the famous Welcome Laboratory, where he had gained laurels. It was Charles Ashton again who got him a place there.

Yet there had always been a difference between him and his fellow workers. He had worked with no definite aim or ambition, beyond the joy of immediately dealing with things that absorbed him. His desire had rather been to understand than to reduce to practise. When he had understood enough to satisfy a reasonable hunger, he had imagined there would be for him Wallingford, the estate, and the quiet orderly life that his fathers had lived before him—a place to fill if he could. He had always felt he would not fill it the worse because he had given these early years of his to his one passion.

Then eight years ago a new development happened to him. He became possessed not only with the desire to understand but to use his knowledge.

The pellagra interest had sprung up in his path and he had pursued it steadily, and in the end he would have something to show for his pursuit. That was a great thing for any man of forty to say to himself. He might so easily have failed. Now he knew that one of the lesser curses of humanity was on the road to annihilation, and he had been the allowed instrument therein.

It was all quite well from Dr. Giraldi's standpoint.

But there was another standpoint.

What about that devastating interlude that had severed the even threads of those eight years' concentrated effort, with such irremediable effect?

He did not want it remedied. Honor—and all Honor stood for—his race, his name, the very back-behind consciousness of the man, was the mainspring of his life. He did not phrase it to himself like that.

He only said in his heart that he wanted Honor, Honor, and again Honor!

He would be the servant of nothing but his own soul. It was he who would command there, not science, in spite of Dr. Giraldi's dictum.

He need not desert science, but she would have to be contented with less than the whole of his life. For the future was already given to Honor.

The thought of her rather than the thought of all his visitor implied, held the deepest sway over Anthony to-night.

She had been here in the house above with him, in the garden, on this seat with him, on just such a night of moonlight, and now it was all empty of her, empty and desolate. He had not been able to keep her. All his years of labour had not taught him how to do that. The call of her own master passion had proved stronger than all he had had to offer her! His pride—perhaps because that night it had touched a certain eminence—broke down utterly at the thought. He leant his head on the back of the seat, struggling to school himself to reason and humility.

Whatever return fortune might mete out to him for the years he had given to his chosen labour it would be all empty, purposeless, and waste, if Honor would have no share in it. The eight years—no, the eighteen years—counted as nothing beside those few months of wedded life, or against the call and the pushing force of the generations behind him!

And Honor was *fond* of him! She liked to be with him so long as his presence did not interfere between her and her writing, he was just enough, not to say even to himself—her ambition! For it was in achieving not in achievement that lay the spell. It was this he had recognised in her from the first and understood because it was so with him also.

She must be allowed full play for that achieving

as he had been. She was not to blame for being twenty-three when he was forty. The sting of it all lay there though. For she was at the commencement of the road, and he, coming out on to accomplishment.

Giraldi's words were fraught with double meaning when he thought of Honor, but he resisted that, he held his mind steadily to the thought of how long it might reasonably be before she learnt to drive her genius in yoke with the subtle demands of marriage. She must make the discovery herself if they were either of them to lay hold of the happiness she shadowed in her books and that he still dreamed of giving her.

What had he to offer her against the rivalry of her art?

That question had been with him for many months but of late another question had taken form in his mind, had striven to hurry him in decisions, in actions, and the settled plan of his life. What had he to offer against the awakening of her mature soul to love, perhaps of another man, he with his forty years, his limited experience of women, and that first fatal mistake of his in attempting to purchase what must be a free gift? She must continually be meeting younger men better equipped for the great business of winning and mating, than himself. Would she remember what was here already? His instinct told him she must walk through this fire also alone. Freedom was the very essence of the trial by which their happiness could be won. This was the penalty demanded of him for so prematurely taking her young life into his keeping.

He never doubted her. He had no shadow of fear for his name, but he would have given his life's work to save her the pain of waking too late. He wanted to be with her, to see her, to keep her in mind of just what he could give her, when she was ready for it. And this he could not do without being traitor to those

long years of service to the "tyrannical Mistress" as Giraldi called her.

How could falseness to his own chosen work help another? Such a thing was contrary to every code he held dear. Yet the idea had been with him, and was with him to-night, with all the force of a great temptation. It had been in his mind to show Giraldi far more than he had done, to beg of him to send him a man of his own selecting who would carry on the work so nearly done, and leave him—Anthony—free while there was time, while Honor was still safe and his for the winning, if he might only freely give himself to the task.

He had only to forswear faith with himself—and what he had set out to do.

No, not that way would he give her the happiness of her dreams, as he did not doubt he could give it her. This was the sure abiding conviction wherein lay the key to all his faithful dealing with her. Once Honor loved him, they could together unlock the door of heaven, but the love must be given as freely as his own, no one must be defrauded in the giving, that was the condition of entrance. Anything less meant at best a lower paradise.

Anthony wanted heaven—no less!

CHAPTER II.

A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER.

Towards the end of October Honor received a letter from Anthony which cost her some secret tears, and elicited a response so expressive of content with his suggestions, and full of assurance of the progress of her book, that Anthony, in his turn, felt that the unlocking of that golden gate of happiness grew more remote than ever.

This was the letter she received:

"Villa Guardini,
Trozzio, Lombardy.

"My dearest:

"I have been trying to arrange to come to England again for Christmas, or part of the winter anyhow. It would have been so good to spend it in a home of our own, to have filled the village with our friends, and let you experience a real country Christmas. But all that must still wait for the future. I have to go to Roumania next week as Nicholls is ill. I don't know in the least when I shall get back here, and England is quite out of the question till February, I fear. It is vexatious, but I cannot possibly leave poor Nicholls there alone ill, and should go sooner if it were possible to leave here. You will readily understand all that and would not wish me to do otherwise, I know. What will you choose to do yourself for the winter? Roumania or Italy? Gateways or London? You must make your own choice, my dear, I should rejoice to have you with me, of course, but it's bad weather for travelling and would mean roughing it, and I cannot judge how far this would interrupt your work.

I know myself how prejudicial it is sometimes to be interrupted at some precise point in writing, so I shall quite understand if you say you do not want to leave England just now. You have said very little about your book in your last few letters but I hope all goes well. I spend my leisure hours" (Oh Anthony, how many hours of leisure have you now?) "thinking over the idea of which you told me, and wondering how your dear self will deal with it.

"Let me know as soon as possible what you decide to do. You will find Gateways lonely for all the winter, and you may prefer to go to London again if your father, or should I say Alice, could have you. Do whatever best suits your work.

"I am,

"Your loving

"Anthony."

For nearly ten minutes Honor hated her book with intensity. It was evident that he cared for it and her achievements more than he cared for her personally! Andrea must be right after all! Yet it is possible that but for Andrea she would not have put such an interpretation on the letter.

The net result, however, was that she sat down and wrote a proper letter of thanks to Anthony for his consideration, reported herself well, and discoursed at length on the book. She said she would arrange to return to London till the spring, and leave Gateways with a caretaker. She did not think that would break into her work as it was well advanced. It might even be good, as she needed some references which she could get better in town. She added a postscript to this, saying that February seemed rather far off but that she must not show less consideration for his really important work than he did for her employment.

If Anthony had had only a little more experience

of women, he might have read between the lines, but he took it all as an accurate record of Honor's feelings and desires, and was accordingly convinced that whatever she did desire, it was not to be with him at Guardini.

In the middle of a very unsatisfactory morning's work after receiving this letter (he was now well at work on his own book) he received a wire from Andrea. It was sent from Rome and demanded hospitality for a night.

This offered a welcome break in his monotonous routine and he wired back in the affirmative, congratulating himself it had not been a week later when he should be in Roumania. He could not leave this week because of some very delicate experiments that it was imperative for him to watch. After that Leonello could be left safely in charge and he could start to look after his sick subordinate.

Andrea arrived the next day very cheerful and content with himself and the world, and inclined to think well of a certain great Cardinal who had commissioned a picture for his private oratory. He owned frankly that his wire was not entirely prompted by desire to see his cousin, but that in the neighbourhood of Brescia there lived an old man who possessed a secret receipt for the concoction of a certain colour. He had hitherto supplied Andrea with this, but he was now ill and there was some danger of the secret dying with him. Andrea had learnt all this from a friend in Rome.

"He's got a daughter, I know," Andrea said, "but it's very doubtful if he'd tell her. He has a pretty average opinion of women, I know. The old scoundrel is quite likely to die and take his secret with him. People are so selfish."

"He'll live as long as he can, I have no doubt," Anthony assured him, with a faint smile.

He learnt that Andrea had only been in Rome two days, and had come straight over from England.

"I'd start a studio there again some time," he grumbled, "if I could only put Lawrence in charge when I was away, but he'll make a fuss if I suggest his leaving Bertini, I suppose, though Heaven knows there are musicians enough in Rome."

"Painters enough too," laughed Anthony, "don't make yourself out worse than you are, Andrea. Lawrence must stick to Bertini after all he's done for him. How is he getting on?"

"I heard him talking to Honor about a concert in the spring."

His quick eyes took in the mere flicker of a change in Anthony's face at the mention of Honor.

"She was in town for a day or so just before I left," he added casually.

"She is probably going to stay in town for the rest of the winter," Anthony told him slowly.

"Ah! I am glad! She works a bit too hard when she is alone, not but what she looks very well. Stansted agrees with her, don't you find?"

There was something in the adroit way in which he turned his assertion into a question that made Anthony thoughtful. The assertion was pleasing, the question troubled him. He did *not* know how she looked, and Andrea did! He moved restlessly, and suggested adjourning to his own small private sanctum.

He explained to Andrea that he did not use the big salon downstairs while Honor was away, and was under the impression he mentioned it casually, as if her absence was a mere matter of days. But the watchful Andrea found in tone and look that which, had he had an ordinary conscience, would have caused him some compunction. As it was, it excited his interest, which was perhaps the nearest approach to compunction of which he was capable.

Honor had indeed spent two days of the previous week in London and a great part of that time in his studio. There was a knotty point in the book which needed, if not discussion, at least opportunity for open speech. Difficulties of this sort usually vanished if she could secure a ready listener, and Andrea knew this well, and had traded on it. The difficulty had vanished under his apparently attentive ear, while in return he utilised her presence to finish some of the many unfinished studies she had inspired.

She had gone away grateful and satisfied, and wondering if there really was anything in his laughing assertion that London fog was better than sea fog for the brain.

But when she had gone, he had turned and cursed Stansted and Gateways, and had gone off to Rome in a humour that boded ill for the Cardinal's purse or private idea as to what his picture should be.

He had had no thought of visiting Anthony till he heard of old Bertholdi's illness, and recollected that the Villa Guardini was near Brescia, and would be a convenient halting place.

It was on the journey from Rome that he had fallen to wondering how Anthony liked his return to bachelor freedom. That vague wonder quickly deepened to interest, and behind the interest at first lay some subtle subconscious gleam of satisfaction.

Andrea had never quite forgiven Anthony for his marriage. He told him that he had valued Honor's friendship more than many men value their wife's companionship, and that Anthony had robbed him of this addition to his life, therefore, it was as pardonable for him to resent it, as it was to resent any other form of robbery. He did not trouble to go further and remembered that Anthony had never lifted a finger to interfere in that friendship with Honor, and that—so far—Honor's presence in his studio was a more fre-

quent occurrence than her presence at the Villa Guardini.

Anthony found it very good to be once more with a fellow-countryman and one of his own race and name. He had hardly had leisure till now to realise how completely cut off from all social intercourse he had been of late. He wanted to say much, and to endeavour to bridge over those months of silence, so poorly spanned by mere pen and ink, yet he found little to say.

Andrea questioned him tactfully about his work, and discovered that he was unwilling to talk "shop" and desirous to put it on one side for something else, which for a long time it seemed he could not manage to say, yet which persistently fought for expression.

It found it at last.

They had talked indifferently of Rome, of the cardinal, the picture, of the amazing division in the Church itself, and then Andrea, suddenly recalling events of his last visit, asked:

"How are the people here? I mean apart from your pet pellagra patients?"

Anthony leant forward and stirred the logs into a blaze.

"I should like to speak of that to you," he said, in a curious, halting way. "You know them perhaps better than I do. I never had any difficulty with them, I have tried to be friends with them and until this last year I thought I had succeeded. They used to come here when they needed anything, or even to talk over their affairs with me. They were glad to see me in their houses, or so I had the vanity to think. They were interested in what I was doing—timidly I admit, but still interested." He stopped.

Andrea listened with that silent attention which stood him in place of real sympathy, and so misled his hearers.

"Now that has all altered," Anthony continued steadily, but with lines of distress becoming visible about his mouth. "They will have nothing to do with me, they hardly let their children speak to me if they can help it. The other day I picked up a child who had fallen off a wall, and the mother rushed at me and dragged it from me as if I should infect it." They are antagonistic even to the few patients I still find amongst them. I have asked vainly as to what is my crime, they say it is nothing—nothing! but they continue to hate me!" He dwelt on the last words like one who had made an unwelcome discovery. In point of fact Anthony had not before voiced his conviction aloud, and it sounded very unpleasing and none the less true.

"I think," he went on, looking up suddenly at his listener—"it sounds preposterous, I know—but I can't help thinking it has something to do with Honor's absence. They miss her perhaps, they were very fond of her, you see."

"You could easily test that by having her back."

His tone was purposely light, but his half closed eyes were alive with excessive attention.

There was a silence which Anthony broke unwillingly.

"Yes, exactly. I could prove it if she came back—but—"

"Have you told her this—about the people?" demanded Andrea, who knew very well he had not told her.

"No, she would come at once if I did."

"And you don't want her here? Forgive me putting it so baldly, Anthony—women interfere with work, that's understood!"

Anthony suddenly sprang up. He pushed aside some trifles on the mantelpiece impatiently, made two or three efforts to speak and then turning, faced An-

drea with tightly clenched hands and a little tremor shaking him.

"But I want her here more than anything in heaven or earth! I'd give nine years of work that she should come back here of her own will—her own desire! My life's as empty as this place, there's no purpose left in anything—she'd come if I asked her—if I only hinted I wanted her—she'd leave her book and the life she really likes—and what good would that be to me?"

There was a fierce, bitter note of passion in his voice. Andrea in his absorbed amazement hardly dared breathe lest he should lose some new point.

But a life-long habit of control asserted itself almost at once. Anthony stopped himself on the brink of a self-revelation that would have overjoyed his cousin. At least, when he did go on, it was in an even, low tone that seemed to hold in check a perfect flood of emotion.

"She is quite fond of me, you see—and I happen to want something else—that's all! Besides, I promised her her writing should always count first. There are times though," he added drearily, "when I want to put my promise and my pride in my pocket and ask her to come to me here."

The boyish wistfulness in his voice went strangely with the man's tired face.

Andrea was aware of an access of pity and of a quick, disagreeable stab that might mean real contrition, something anyway, sufficiently novel to distress him.

"Why don't you do it then? I daresay she would like to come if she thought you wanted her."

"Yes, if I am to be a beggar, I must accept that and be thankful—she'd like to come if it pleases me!" He smiled drearily. "But if I wish to please her in her turn, I shall leave her where she is."

"Women like to be wanted. You may take that as

an axiom, Anthony, if you are really ignorant of it."

Andrea spoke still under the influence of that little stabbing thought. Moreover, Anthony's unhappiness was visibly before him, and arousing his impressionable nature for the moment. Whether or no, it was Andrea's inclusion of Honor in the term "women," or a tardy perception that he was discussing his wife with another man, and that man Andrea, but Anthony quite abruptly changed the subject. It had been a relief to speak, and he felt the better for it. He also knew that Andrea could have given him valuable enlightenment on ways feminine if he had cared to question him. But he did not. He was reluctant to owe anything with regard to Honor to his cousin, save that never forgotten obligation of their introduction.

Andrea had some time on his hands the next morning before starting for Brescia, and he wandered into the village to pick up the threads of much curious information over which he pondered on his journey. He was to return to the Villa that night, or the next, if he could not accomplish his purpose in time for the evening train.

The silence as to the cause of the antipathy against Anthony appeared to Andrea to be a more serious matter than his cousin actually realised. It was quite obvious to him that nothing short of Honor's return would long restrain the people from open revolt against the man they regarded as guilty of her deportation. For by one of those unaccountable freaks of the ignorant mind—supported in this case by unusual circumstances, Honor stood to these people in the light of a protective saint, at whose advent *pellagra* had died down, as it had never done before the material weapons of the doctors, and whose presence afforded them safety and protection. Was it not she who had saved Nina's child, who had given Catterina the burning wool that

had eased her aching limbs, who had passed through Cesare's fields which had yielded a double harvest, eaten Narcisso grapes, and was ever such a vintage?— and so on, through fifty odd foolish little items, that piled up evidence to their simple minds as to the beneficent results of the beautiful signora's presence amongst them.

On the top of this prevailing belief there arose (and it was impossible to prove who had started the dangerous rumour) the idea of the Evil Eye being possessed by the man who had sent their patron saint away—who perhaps even had "put her away" (who shall set a limit to the spread of evil and secret suggestion?) lest her healing presence should interfere with the mysteries of that strange room where were found all the evils of mankind in glass bottles.

Foolish, childish, even hateful beliefs, yet to them so simple and unanswerable! Andrea, with his half Italian blood understood them very well and hesitated as to whether he should warn Anthony or not, finally deciding not to do so.

There was only one satisfactory way of dealing with the matter and that was for Honor to come back to the Villa Guardini. Andrea almost decided he would send her back. He thought it over anyhow, as he set out to unearth old Bertholdi's secret.

Andrea took a motor at Brescia as the quickest means of getting to Peloso, and the quickest means of leaving it again. The sight of the motor stopping outside Bertholdi's house collected a little crowd, first composed of children, but soon reinforced by curious men and women who, however, made no attempt to enter the house which was a square wooden-shuttered "cottage," built of brick to which the plaster clung in discolored patches, and over which climbed an ill-trained vine.

It was well known that old Bertholdi was dying,

and there was little regret and not much interest in that approaching fact. What was of interest was to discover if it were true that proud and uncompanionable daughter of his—Margherita—had indeed sent all the way to Brescia for a doctor, when every one else was well content either to die without medical assistance, or to be satisfied with the really able administration of Dr. Ferrara of Chiari.

But this was not Andrea Bradon's first visit, and these people have long memories for faces. An adventurous boy, who poked his head round the door and was summarily ejected by Margherita, announced that it was only the artist signor who had come before, and the interest died down and the gazing crowd melted away. Artist gentlemen came often to see old Bertholdi, though they would not often come in future.

Perhaps Margherita deserved the censure of her neighbours as being proud and unfriendly. She certainly evinced no friendliness towards the Signor Bradon, withstanding all his entreaties to be allowed to see her father, with sullen defiance.

From time to time as he argued, she glanced at him sombrely from under her black brows, twining her arms in her blue apron and rocking herself to and fro. She had not much love for the old man who lay dying in the next room, but she held close to some primitive instinct to shelter his last hours from intrusion from the outside world, with which he had so nearly finished. Moreover, she did not like the Signor Bradon, she had disquieting recollections of him.

It took Andrea nearly twenty minutes to get his way. At the end of that time she rose suddenly, indicated the door leading to an inner room with a superb gesture, and turned away, as if it were no more concern of hers.

Andrea lost no time. He had a great repugnance to deathbeds or to illness of any sort unless of such an unusual kind as to arouse interest. There was

nothing at all unusual in the deathbed of this disagreeable, cunning old man, who had lacked in his life the brains to exploit the priceless secret that was his inheritance from far-off, more brilliant ages.

He lay huddled up under a yellow coverlet, a mere dried up, withered bundle—whose only apparent connection with life was centered in his small, dark eyes, which were still lit with a cunning gleam, as if he rejoiced even now over every moment he filched from the devouring grip of the enemy. Yet in these last moments, beyond the radius of the last confession and the last ministrations of the priest, Bertholdi's feeble mind kept a firmer hold on his precious secret than on his fears of purgatory, or his hopes of Paradise. A faded yellow strip of paper lay beneath his pillow, and now and again a gaunt hand clutched at it with crooked fingers. That the Signor Andrea Bradon should be here and willing to pay him well for the secret while he stood at death's door, seemed to his failing senses only the natural sequence of life.

"I was told in Rome that you were dying, Bertholdi," said Andrea, without any preamble, his only concern being to get the business over as soon as possible. "That's probably a lie—I daresay you are good for ten more years, if you get over this—but in case you don't, what about your secret? It's a bit important to some of us, to know what becomes of it! Are you going to leave it to Margherita?"

The old man's eyes shot such a look of deadly contempt towards the door where his daughter now stood watching them grimly, that Andrea was conscious of a feeling of sickness. It seemed too horrible that this moribund body could still find reason to express contempt for life so vigorous and complete as that manifest in the girl who watched.

"Bah! a woman!" The words came in a thin, breaking voice, as if they held a curse in them.

"I have no son—no son—no son—" he babbled on weakly, "let it die with me—it is all finished!"

"Your secret is worth a good deal of money, you are robbing your daughter, you know." Andrea bent low over the bed as he spoke. "Give it to me. I've always paid you well, Bertholdi, and I'll look after her, and see your name shan't be forgotten."

With a curious snarl the old man raised himself on one arm and the other shaking hand groped under the pillow.

"Margherita! Margherita!" he quavered out.

She came swiftly, with no glance at the visitor.

"See you here—" he drew out the paper with palsied hands clutching it in his fingers, as with a bird's claw. "You are only a woman—good for nothing but to obey—he—there—he want this, it's worth money, girl. He'd take it—and you—"

The voice fell from a harsh shrillness into a cruel chuckle. He tried to say more, failed for a moment, and fell back upon the pillow.

"Go put it on the fire now—straight, it's the last thing I tell you do to. You shall not have it! Burn it, I say burn it! . . . It was for my so—no girl!—no son . . . no son . . ."

He fell to muttering the words over and over and over again.

The girl unhooked the paper from the clutching fingers and turning as swiftly and silently as she had come, went back to the other room.

Andrea was after her in a moment, without another look at the bed or the occupant. The closed eyes opened again, and followed him. There was a futile effort to speak—to call, and nothing more. Andrea gripped the girl's hand and the paper together as she was in the act of dropping the latter on to the little charcoal fire.

"Don't turn, don't look at me," he said softly and swiftly. "I do not want to do you harm."

Terror sprang to her averted face. Terror, but no surprise! She had only found a reason for her instinctive hatred of him. She crossed herself hurriedly and then clenched the middle fingers of her left hand, extending the outward ones. Her right hand was still in his grasp.

"Yes, that's very wise—unless I wished differently," Andrea went on calmly. "I don't want to harm you at all, but unless you give me that paper I shall go back to the room there and—look at him."

Against her will her face turned towards him, white and frightened like some trapped wild animal.

"Give it me, it will hurt nobody," he urged.

"He told me to burn it."

"He's too ill to know what he's doing or saying. It's mere folly."

Still her fingers kept their hold and there was no sign of yielding in her rigid form.

"There are worse things than dying—suppose he does not die yet, not for a long time—and wants to—?" There was a cruel menace in Andrea's voice that seemed born of some far-off strain of blood linking him nearer her, and nearer the unconscious Bertholdi than to the Bradons whose name he bore.

"Shall I go?" He made pretence to loose his hold of her a little.

"What could I say—he'll ask?" she muttered.

"Say you burnt it."

The girl's eyes wandered restlessly from the fire to that inner door. She could see the edge of the bed and the yellow cover, but not her father.

"Good heavens, Margherita! Why do you hesitate, you little fool? You don't exactly love him, all the same you bear him no ill-will, you'd rather he died at peace, eh? though he's never wished you anything but ill!"

With a sudden effort she freed herself, but again

Andrea was too quick for her, pulling her out of reach of the fire and temptation. He turned her face up towards him roughly:

"You fool, you little fool—you shall look at me!"

Margherita shivered from head to foot like one with ague, loosed hold of the paper and twisted herself free.

He made no haste now, but folded the treasure carefully, and put it in his pocket with a little laugh, nodded to her and went straight back to the motor. Then with his foot on the step he paused, considered a moment, and went back into the house.

"Margherita," he called her imperiously.

She was still leaning against the wall as he had left her, but she came towards him shivering still.

"Let me know if you want anything when he's gone. You have my address." He held out two gold pieces towards her, but she flung her apron over her head weeping bitterly and would not touch them, so they fell to the ground. "Pick them up, you foolish child," he said not unkindly; "and you need not be frightened really; it is my cousin, not I, who has the evil eye!" He pulled down her sheltering arms and kissed her.

"You aren't overlooked—that's for luck. Go and see to the old man!"

This time he did go, leaving her alone; quite alone, for there was nothing but the worn out shell of what had once been a man on the bed with the yellow coverlet now.

Andrea returned to the Villa Guardini for the night well content. He had the recipe and although, so far, he had paid nothing for it, he could not be accused of defrauding any one since that old scoundrel of a Bertholdi had never meant to let his daughter benefit by it. As it was, Andrea had every intention of seeing that Margherita did benefit. It would be easy enough

to find some lawyer in Brescia who would undertake to pay her an annuity without involving himself in any particular trouble.

As to the ruse by which he had obtained possession of the paper it did not trouble him in the least though he was sufficiently awake to Anthony's susceptibilities to glide skilfully over the important and inevitable question as to how he had been able to persuade Bertholdi to make him his heir.

"It was really only a matter for the daughter," Andrea explained carelessly, "Bertholdi was past caring, and she seemed only anxious to get rid of me—thought I had the evil eye or some such nonsense!" He gave Anthony a quick glance but saw he merely looked surprised and not much enlightened.

"She just let me take it. Of course, I'll see she is not the loser."

"Is Bertholdi still alive?"

"I really don't know, I should think not," returned Andrea indifferently. "When are you coming to England, Anthony?"

"Not till February. And I find I must go to Roumania to-morrow, and not wait till next week. Nicholls is worse. The experiments must shift for themselves! If it's possible, I shall bring him back here to recoup."

Again that indecision which had made itself felt in Anthony the previous night became apparent, and yet again they parted for the night with it still unresolved.

The next day Andrea left. It was only half an hour before his departure that Anthony brought himself to the point of expression.

They were strolling in the narrow formal garden that lay below and to the right of the entrance court. Andrea had been giving his cousin the rather curious and interesting history of an ancient vase, at present half covered with creepers.

"You will be seeing Honor probably when you are back, as she will be in London?"

Andrea admitted that he might see her.

Anthony, who was sitting on the edge of the balustrade, smoked hard at an unlit cigarette.

"I have been thinking about what you said—asking her to come. But I don't see how I can—I'd say too much if I said anything."

He looked pleadingly at Andrea for help who saw it and would not see.

"Supposing that it did not interfere with her book . . . and she would like to come . . . for a time . . . for a short visit. . . . Well, I should be glad. It's true; I want her. I can't ask her though . . . if she knew?"

He hesitated, discovered his cigarette unlighted and remedied it.

"I mean if she could know—not directly from me. It's not bad in the winter, here, supposing that you . . . Could you see if she really has a distaste for the place or not? I should not be happy for her to come against her own desire. She'd never own it to me, you see, if I ask her."

He blundered on, hopelessly involved, struggling at once to conceal his deep anxiety over the subject and to preserve a cool consideration for Honor's private desires.

The tangled sentences offered but poor cover to his real thoughts and were but an inadequate expression of them, nevertheless Andrea understood to the finest, most subtle point of understanding, and if he let him flounder on, through half a dozen more foolish sentences, it was only that he might get as much sensation as possible out of the position, not that he had need of further information as to Anthony's wishes.

"I think I see what you mean," he said at last, with tardy mercy. "You don't want to press the point your-

self in case it is unwelcome, but if she really cares to come, or is indifferent either way you'd like her to know the place here rather wants a woman round—I'll be quite sure to see her soon if, as you say, she's coming to town, and I'll bear it in mind."

Anthony drew a long breath of relief. He was like an indifferent swimmer who had got out of his depth and once more felt firm ground beneath his feet.

He talked quite gaily to Andrea in the last five minutes, and when his cousin got into the waiting carriage he added, after his goodbye:

"Well, don't forget, mind."

"No, I'll remember," said Andrea.

To do him justice Andrea left the Villa Guardini with every intention of sending Honor back to her husband post haste.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ANDREA KEPT HIS PROMISE.

ANDREA returned to London (he stayed three days in Paris on the way) to find Anthony's information concerning his wife's movements was an accomplished fact. Honor was once more installed in Number 10, St. Jude's Road. Also he learnt that Alice had at last definitely accepted Mr. Timmins, and the wedding was to be in the spring. The latter item of news, Lawrence volunteered; the former he admitted on being questioned. For three days Andrea found work to do in the studio at the hours when, according to former habits, Honor might be expected to drop in. To his surprise, she made no appearance, however. He did not write to her, he thought that since Lawrence had gone to the Passfields' on the same evening as his own arrival, to a musical "At Home," in honour of Alice's engagement, Honor could not but know of his return.

The three days having passed and fog having taken possession of the metropolis, he flung aside his foolish pretence of work and departed to pay a long promised visit to some friends in Wiltshire, who wondered what had happened to make Andrea Bradon so scathingly witty. It so happened that the lady with the sad eyes was visiting at the same house and, in default of other adequate amusement, Andrea paid so much attention to this lady, an attention so carefully modulated with respect, that his host—a good-hearted and simple-minded sportsman—took occasion to remark on the unlikelihood of that confounded husband of hers dying

as any decent man would after putting her in such a hole! That Andrea was not amused at it was a proof that he was nursing some deeper discontent than mere contempt for the fatuous credulity of a fellow-being.

He continued to exploit Mrs. Warman and, with an idea that she might suggest unconsciously some inspiration for the cardinal's picture, he made one or two studies of her head, until bored by the confidences his whole attitude invited to the unwary, he found one day a peremptory reason for returning to London.

The previous day he had written to Honor, which he might have done at first, but for some criss-cross reasoning in his own mind.

"Dear Honor:

"You display a lamentable lack of interest in my return. Considering where I have been staying I expected you to prove yourself a walking note of interrogation, and as hard to satisfy as a civil service examiner. You don't deserve to be told I shall be back again in town to-morrow morning.

Yours, ever,

"Andrea."

In obedience to which note, Honor was at Abbey Road on the afternoon of the following day.

It had been a day of fog and general gloom. Andrea had, however, filled the studio with mimosa and lilac at ruinous prices, had ordered tea, and accentuated the disorder of the room with cunning adroitness. He saw Lawrence depart for his music lesson without informing him of the possible visitor. It was not till Lawrence had gone that Andrea began to take an interest in the atmosphere. It was fairly clear here on comparatively high ground, but that was no guarantee that it was clear enough at Kilburn to tempt Honor to face the walk. He remembered one could see over Kilburn from the top room that Lawrence

had appropriated, and he climbed up there with intent to look. The room was still uncarpeted, unfurnished, with whitewashed walls and curtainless windows, but a fire had been carefully made up in the old-fashioned grate, and banked with coal for the protection of the wonderful piano. There were some open sheets of manuscript music on the table. Honor's last book beside them, two orderly piles of bound and unbound music on the floor. The order, indeed, of the room and its immaculate cleanliness gave the intruder a throb of artistic pleasure. His quick mind began to make mental notes. He could not have explained why that picture he had yet to paint lived in his memory, but it came up before him very distinctly, and then, with an odd little laugh at himself, he suddenly stopped, pushed the thought from his mind and going to the window, looked out—his first and only purpose for being there.

Undoubtedly the fog did not hang so heavily over Kilburn as he had feared and even while he looked the dusky veil lifted slightly, stretched to a phantom-like attenuation. An invisible hand tore the pall to grey filaments, to wisps of cobwebs, to nothing! and left in their place a sky that still showed an apology for blueness, hinting that beyond the vast smoke-ridden homes of men somewhere out there in the country, the sun shone.

Honor arrived at the precise moment when a thin gleam of yellow light made a poor effort to trace on the empty wall opposite the delicate tracery of a tree.

Andrea heard her ring and went down one story to await the announcement, but he allowed her three minutes' grace more to reach the studio and take in the untidy condition as a dumb protest against her tardy coming.

When he did go in, he found her already essaying the tidying of a chaotic pile of papers.

"It's quite disgraceful," she began, trying to hold in check her ready smile.

"I know," returned Andrea, with dry severity.

"I can't imagine what Lawrence is thinking about."

"Music," retorted Andrea; "you would have it so, you know. In any case he's hardly a boy now and two men together and no woman!" He flung out his hand towards the imagined result with despair.

"Never mind it now. You came with the sun and you're both welcome enough, though you're tardy visitors."

"But I didn't know you were back."

There was a shadow of a pause.

"I suppose Lawrence forgot to mention anything so uninteresting the other night?"

"There was not much opportunity. We were all a great deal more excited over Lawrence's music than over the movements of your Royal Highness."

She dropped him a little mocking curtsy.

Then with a change of manner, she said:

"Oh, Andrea, he is a genius, really and truly, have you really heard him?"

"Worship the rising sun!" he told her scornfully; "still, I should think it would be a bit odd if he were a fool, considering—. Come and sit over the fire and talk, Honor."

There was a big sofa before the wide brick hearth. Honor's favourite position was to curl herself up at one end of it. Andrea, when she did this, invariably pushed his special chair to such a position that he could see her against a suitable background.

He was amazingly content. He forgot the fog, he forgot his passing annoyance with Lawrence; he forgot the wasted week in Wiltshire, and the impossibility of finding any inspiration for the cardinal's picture. He was conscious only of an exquisite satisfaction of being where he was, and in Honor being

where she was; and, as he looked at her, athwart his satisfaction there ran a surprised wonder at his presumption in fancying he had ever really successfully and worthily represented that particular living sentiment being through the medium of paint and canvas.

Worthily represented? Why, even his line—his marvellous line—faded to poverty when he mentally set it beside the living reality. It was for him the very luxury of humiliation. He ached with desire of achievement, to compass, at last, something worthy that mystery of life, which it would seem always and only overwhelmed him in Honor's personality. He could no more have endured to have her there always before him, near him, calling and stirring the little known depth within himself than a devotee could have lived forever on his knees before the shrine of his god. Only like the devotee it was necessary for his existence—or for the existence of that unknown corner of himself—that she should be there at need—as the shrine to the worshipper.

They sat quite silent for some minutes; Honor intent on many things, Andrea intent on one. At last she turned to him, smiling.

"Well? 'The note of interrogation' desires all the information you can impart now and at once!"

Then, and then only, he remembered Anthony, his promise, and his intention!

Poor old Anthony! He recollected he had felt quite sorry for him, but after all he had his work and Honor was not necessary for that, not as she was for Andrea himself. He had been particularly and momentarily conscious of Anthony's need; he was now wholly and acutely conscious of his own need and pleasure at this precise moment.

"Guardini was nice enough, but I fancy Anthony won't be sorry for a change. He's gone off to Rou-

mania as no doubt you know, to see after the man Nicholls. Have you ever met him?"

"My thirst for information is not yet satisfied," she told him pointedly.

Andrea laughed.

"What do you want? How was Anthony looking? What did he wear? What did he have for dinner? Well, he looked fairly well—a bit thin—I see he still goes to the same tailor, but you might send him some ties. He bought the one he was wearing in Brescia. The dinner was as excellent as Anchora knew how—is that all?"

"No," she replied, gazing at him without the flicker of an eyebrow.

"Oh, unfortunate one! Well, he seems as occupied as usual with his glass bottles and the accursed pellagra. Still, as I said, I fancy he'll be glad to get a change down to Roumania. The folk at Volestra are about fed up with pellagra, and not so interested as of yore. Yet Guardini is a good enough place to winter in. Don't you think so?"

He wanted the information. It was amusing to play with himself, or with that queer corner of his *ego* which pushed him into saying these things, as it had pushed him into making that ridiculous promise to Anthony, as—if he were not careful—it might push him into saying a great deal more at this present moment, than he intended to say.

"It's very nice indeed in winter."

"You don't care about it, do you?" he persisted.

"I do. I love it, but there are other things I care about more—now," she added, half under her breath.

Andrea deliberately blindfolded his understanding and thus found himself absolved from further struggle, if it might ever have been termed a struggle at all. Honor plainly cared more for England and her own occupation than she did for Guardini and Anthony's

company. Well, that was Anthony's misfortune, and his own—luck!

He was so well satisfied that he dealt her out other items of Volestra news and then passed on to give her an amusing, if not strictly veracious, account of his adventures in Paris.

Honor quitted Italy reluctantly; despite her refusal to question she was possessed with hunger to hear more—far more about Anthony and her real home. She wondered if he used the big salon, if any one put flowers in the rooms? Anthony had brought back most of her books and personal possessions with him, when he came to settle her in at Gateways, but she never pictured Guardini without them, or without herself. To think of it was to be there in spirit. Apart from her presence it had not existed for her at all.

Andrea had been there and she was bitterly jealous of him for the moment. She was on the brink of tears as well as on the verge—and this was of much greater importance—of springing up and announcing her intention of ignoring Anthony's wishes and departing to Italy as soon as steam and water could take her!

Some impulse sent Andrea's straying thoughts back from Paris to Volestra.

"Anthony means to be in England for the birthday of this book, Honor. He is so ridiculously proud of you. I told him novels were nearly as common as babies and like babies, mostly interesting to their producers. But he won't have it so. He has a pathetic belief in his own special pet genius. Do you like to be taken so seriously, Honor?"

"No!" She sprang up with a petulant shake of her head. "I shall be taking myself seriously soon."

"Don't you?" he asked teasingly.

She flashed round on him.

"I never think about it at all. Why should I? I've a story to tell and something to say, and I like telling

it and saying it—and I like other people to want to hear about it; but I don't pretend to myself it matters whether they do or not—to them, if that's taking myself seriously."

There was a volume of scorn in her voice.

"Well," he said reassuringly, "Anthony only considers you a possibility after all. You have yet to reach the pedestal he's set up for you one day."

She went down upon her knees before the fire and played with the tongs. He could see that her hands were shaking, and knew though her head was turned from him that anger was drowning itself in unshed tears, in her eyes.

The anger would die and the tears dry, and all through the winter she would come and go, kneel before his fire, sit on the sofa there, and make him dream of saints and angels, and the amazing mystery of all—woman.

And in the spring Anthony would come and take her away. Probably he'd never see her again in just this same intimate way. No, much evil might befall him before he willingly curtailed one single day of those remaining to him.

CHAPTER IV.

HONOR IN LONDON.

ALICE's preparations for her wedding were conducted with a strictly business-like regard to the practical side of things. Her most intimate friend would never have suspected that, tucked away at the back of her mind, there still smouldered a faint glow amongst the ashes of that little fire of romance she had screened so carefully from public view. She herself was only aware of it when she sat opposite Honor in the evening, or defiantly entered the room set apart for her sister's use, and found her writing. At such moments there was a sombre regard in the look that fell on Honor, eloquent of unspoken disappointment, of pity, and of a slight mocking bitterness. But she held dumbly aloof from speech with Honor, as she had never done in the old days, while seeking her company with unrecognised persistence. She initiated the resigned Sara into the mysteries of economy, but such mention as she did make of her own future arrangements, she made to Honor. Also she showed surprising adroitness in leaving Honor and Mr. Timmins to entertain each other. He bored Honor. It is to be feared he bored Alice too. Nevertheless Honor recognised he had qualities that entitled him to respect. He was generous, persistent, honest, and almost painfully aware of his own shortcomings in the way of social brilliancy, while inclined to over-rate Alice's gifts in this direction. One day Honor discovered that he had a sense of humour, of which he was as shy as a sentimental young lady of a healthy appetite. Honor

announced her discovery to Alice who listened silently.

"Your joint stock of humour should make a very good working capital," Honor told her gaily. "For Heaven's sake cultivate it!"

This was the only piece of advice the married sister bestowed on the about-to-be-married one.

Honor was not wholly unaware of Alice's attitude with regard to her and Anthony's present position. There were times when she was troubled with vague desire to explain that position to her sister, but invariably she drew back before the mere admitting that there was any position to explain. It hurt so intolerably to allow it. She preferred to maintain to herself and the world, that she and Anthony thoroughly understood each other and knew what they were about. Yet every time she made this assertion to herself, the shadow of what had once been rather a pathetic little seedling of pride fell across the promising plant of love, checking its growth, delaying its bloom, nullifying its fruit.

Christmas was rather a failure for the Passfield family that year. No one was really content but Mr. Timmins who issued a genial invitation to one and all to spend the next one under his roof-tree. Honor was silent, and even a little depressed, because the mail had failed to bring a letter from Anthony. Sara was silent, wondering how she would contend in the future, with the extra troubles devolving on the housekeeper at the so-called festive season. Alice was silent, because she foolishly allowed herself to make mental reference to the many Christmases, stretching back further than she cared to count, over which she had presided in the Passfield circle. Mr. Passfield was inclined to a cheerful pessimism. He considered it due to himself secretly to lament the lack of artistic possibilities in his expectant son-in-law, yet it reflected credit on him that his daughters should, in each case,

marry well as far as money was concerned, and a germ of unexpected unselfishness in him rejoiced that Alice, who had so manfully done her duty by a motherless family, should not miss her chance of doing her duty to a mothered one. The younger members of the party were the best content. They rather scored in the matter of brothers-in-law when a gift-giving season came round. Lawrence, who dined with them (Andrea was engaged elsewhere) was habitually quiet and dreamy and no one noticed there was any new element in his silence, or in the apprehensive glances he gave Honor from time to time.

On the whole, however, everyone was glad when Christmas was over, but Honor most of all. She had recognised, as Anthony had known she would, that he could not do less than go to the assistance of the sick Nicholls, yet there was a soreness in her heart that he had not expressed more regret at the untoward circumstances that kept them apart. She chose publicly and privately to put their present separation down to the sick man's account. By the time, however, that January came of age, she was keenly aware of a dissatisfaction with Anthony's weekly letters. There was something lacking in them that she could not express in words. It was not merely his careful abstinence from all reference to their separation, or any desire to shorten the same, it lay rather in his silence on such things as concerned himself. He showed an almost tedious interest in her work and her doings, but credited her with so poor an appetite for his own movements as could be satisfied with bald answers to her equally bald questions.

Andrea, indeed, seemed better informed of Anthony's affairs than she herself, and while her pride would not permit her to ask him directly, he seemed ready enough to volunteer such scraps of information as presumably she might be expected to know.

Had she felt the least need of excuse for her frequent visits to Abbey Road, she could, if she had been quite honest with herself, have found it here, but she neither made excuse nor saw need of it.

Honor was essentially a woman in the necessity it was for her to be needed. Such place as she had filled in her own family circle had been, if not filled, at least bridged over since her marriage, and there was no unbuilding of that bridge possible, even had she so wished. She was a welcome guest always—but no more. The difficulty that a woman finds in becoming a great artist lies in this instinctive struggle with the very foundation of her nature. It is the primary law of her being that she should be of service and that her service should be required of her, and since we have it on the highest authority that those who would be first must serve most, let it stand, that this instinct—mishandled, misused, misunderstood—still lifts a woman to the highest altitude given to human beings to climb. The power to help coupled with passionate desire to be needed governs the feminine world. "Ich dien" is the secret motto of every woman whether she knows it or not. It will express itself in the most primitive instincts of sex, or in the most advanced cravings for social reform. Tell a woman she is not needed in any particular station in life, from the affairs of the country to the management of a kitchen, and you will have her up in arms, resentful, baffled, inexplicably wronged, conscious in her innermost soul that the need for her is everywhere and in everything, that she is by right divine the helpmate of man. The need is implied in the word, its fulfilment guaranteed in the existence of woman. But ever since Eve first confounded service with subjection, women have lost the key to their own power and they act as little children in charge of a powerful dynamo, applying its force in every direction but the right one.

Honor, therefore, being a woman, was hurt to the soul by the apparent fact that she was not needed in the direction in which she expected to be wanted, and therefore, again dimly recognising that she was wanted by Andrea, her groping instinct found outlet in this friendship. It supplied that want in her own existence that her art had not and never could fill for a woman. She was quite unconscious in what way she helped or served Andrea, just as she was unconscious she had any desire to do so, but she did know she experienced a certain content and repose when she sat by the studio fire and made tea for him, and scolded and criticised and laughed at him. She felt this just in proportion as Andrea felt old visions and dreams return to him, a joy of clean sweet air, and a sharp reverence for life.

Only when Lawrence slipped in—whom she consciously and earnestly desired to help—did her satisfaction somewhat fail her.

Lawrence would invariably seat himself between Honor and his father, and his grave, wistful, adoring eyes would plead for her attention, with dumb persistency which even the most complete response to the call failed to quench. Sometimes Andrea was amused to watch him, sometimes he was annoyed. It depended on how much satisfaction he had already got out of Honor's company before Lawrence's appearance. But Honor herself was aware there was something new in Lawrence's mind behind his old mistrust and boyish jealousy of his father, and it troubled her. It seemed remotely connected with that other trouble of hers which she came here to forget or to appease, she hardly knew which.

One such evening when the dusk had fallen, and the firelight flickered and flamed and shot the grey shadows with red gold strands, Lawrence said as he leant, chin in hand, gazing into the fire:

"I am sorry for the people who are pulled in two directions and don't know which thing they ought to do."

It was *à propos* of nothing in particular, and the other two hastily re-adjusted their thoughts to meet it.

"Most people know what they want to do and that's the main thing."

This was Andréa's contribution.

"Indeed, it's not the same thing at all, quite the reverse," objected Honor.

"Little moralist! The world would get on a good deal better if people would consult their instinct more, and their conscience less."

Honor eyed him with doubtful speculation, Lawrence with distrust.

"The best things to do are always done on instinct," persisted Andrea, with half-shut eyes. "And they are generally safe. But when we set up our absurd little tin pots of judgment and call it conscience we usually make a fine mess of natural laws."

"I think," said Honor thoughtfully, "that what you call instinct I call conscience."

"You? You haven't a conscience at all," declared Andrea teasingly, "you are purely instinctive. That's why you are so bearable."

She tried not to smile but her lips quivered. Lawrence looked away from her to the fire again. Whatever had been the train of thought that led to his remark the conversation was falling dangerously near and tantalising far from the mark.

Andrea continued:

"It was not conscience, for example, that brought you here this afternoon, it was your instinct to give other people pleasure. It's not conscience that keeps you working in London when you might be in sunny Italy, it's your instinct to do what's expected of you—to please others again—a charming instinct too! My

instinct is to please myself, and it's a nice, convenient sort of one to have."

He tipped his chair back with an air of placid serenity. It might be a bit dangerous to play thus with his own good fortune, but he preferred to tempt a possible fire into a shortlived blaze, to leaving it smouldering, and there was some faint tinge of restlessness in Honor to-day that would be better extinguished.

"No one is in the least likely to mistake your instinct," laughed Honor indulgently. Then her eyes grew shadowed again. "All the same, you are wrong about me, it's not instinct keeps me here."

Lawrence glanced at her sharply. He was very pale and the tense breathless look of expectation on his face would have caught her attention if she had not been engrossed in her own interesting personality for the moment.

"If you trouble to go deep enough, you will find I am right," Andrea persisted lightly, "but I wouldn't bother if I were you. You are in your right place, so it comes to the same thing. How's the book? You ought to arrange that it and Anthony's book—or his lecture—come off together—such a chance for reporters! There could be two complimentary dinners rolled into one; Fellows of the B.M.A. and F.R.S., and all the great writers of fiction. It would be a glorious opportunity of making them acquainted with each other. Sir Frederick Dreyes would have to take in Miss Mayres. He'd be polite in case she took it into her head to have a go at the doctors, and then Sir Bruton Hill—who shall he have?"

"He will have to have me. Isn't he president or something of the B.M.A.? And I should be so frightened because in my first book I made my heroine fall ill of that useful imaginary complaint, brain fever."

"Oh well, he wouldn't have read it," returned Andrea, consolingly. "As an antidote to pellagra we will give Anthony Miss Wynne."

Honor giggled.

"Well, he wouldn't have read *her*, so we're quits. But she might make him promise to read her. What then?"

"You could say I had invited her, you know."

"Seriously," Honor continued, "we must stand Lawrence a dinner after the concert."

"Musicians?" plaintively.

Lawrence gave a faint little nervous movement, it may have been in protest, but Honor was intent on the laudable endeavour to interest Andrea in his son's future, and did not notice it.

"He shall ask his own friends and we'll supplement the list, if it's not too big."

"What do musicians talk about?" groaned Andrea.

"Very much what artists talk about: Politics and the latest scandal of the clubs! But we'll let him choose some silly 'painty' men of his own sort, won't we, Lawrence? So he need not feel shy."

The little caressing, coaxing note in her voice was too much for Lawrence's efforts to appear indifferent.

"It's ever so nice of you, Honor dear," he said, almost in a whisper; "but I don't think I want a supper, you know—if I am a failure, it would be awful; if I wasn't quite that, I couldn't bear it."

"Not that night, then, but the next when you are used to your laurels."

"When does the interesting event come off?" asked Andrea in his drawling way.

Lawrence knew instantly he was not grateful to Honor for her well meaning attempt to interest his father in the coming trial of his skill.

Andrea had long ago abandoned his half contemptuous attitude towards Lawrence's musical career, and

now accepted it with a tolerant resignation, as a disagreeable necessity which clashed with his own interests. He claimed still as much of Lawrence's time as he could, considering that Lawrence was entitled to just as much life of his own as he knew how to claim and to stick to, what he could not hold for himself Andrea regarded as his own perquisite. There was no outward struggle between them over it, Andrea only laughed when Lawrence successfully steeled himself to resistance but it entailed an agony of moral strain on Lawrence's part. Once, however, he had gained a point he held to it tenaciously, and Andrea never seriously attempted to recover lost ground. He laughed over it all in Lawrence's hearing to other people, making the victory more humiliating than defeat, but in his heart he respected Lawrence the more, after each encounter and was less indifferent to his career than he appeared.

But to Lawrence it was a disastrous, ominous thing that the least shadow of his father should fall across the future he had planned for himself.

He stood up now very suddenly, very pale, and quiet, keeping those nervous hands of his still by hard effort.

"I—I don't even think I want you to go to the concert," he said, with painful difficulty. "I don't mean to be horrid—but I don't think it would help me—and I want nothing after—nothing at all—I only want to be able to come to you, Honor—to come and tell you—"

He moved a step nearer her.

"Wherever you are I shall want to do that," he repeated, in low passionate tones. "Even if you are in Italy."

"But I shan't be in Italy. Why do you say that?" Honor spoke uneasily, troubled both by his words and manner. Lawrence half turned towards his father

with a curious, half-frightened, half-questioning gaze.

For a minute, perhaps, he stood between them thus, swayed by some apprehension or doubt that struggled to escape from his soul by a hundred doors, but never found the possible one of speech. Dumbly eloquent, the fear—whatever it was—was visible to the two who watched him as a riddle that had no answer.

Honor leant forward and held out her hands.

"Lawrence," she called softly, "What is the matter?"

If his lips framed a reply at all, it was an almost inaudible negation to his own demands, and then turning suddenly, he left them, passing from the radius of the firelight, and they heard the door close behind him.

Honor, too, half rose and then sat down again, shaking a little and looking at Andrea with frightened eyes, and he, leaning forward, smiled at her. She knew his mocking secret smile very well, but not this. It, and the light in his eyes, were new to her. It was reassuring, it was kind, it was appealing.

"Don't mind Lawrence," he said softly; "he only, like the rest of us, wants you to understand that when anything happens—good or bad—he needs to tell it to little—Saint Honor."

When she had gone and the studio was no longer a cathedral of dreams, Andrea thought over this epithet he had bestowed on her and found it good, as offering the only possible explanation of the unusual and interesting experience he had succeeded in captivating for himself, when he neglected to deliver Anthony's message to his wife.

CHAPTER V.

HOPE DEFERRED.

ANTHONY did not return to the Villa Guardini till December the twenty-fourth, but he did not bring Nicholls with him because Nicholls had died a week after he arrived at Mai.

Anthony's earlier presence there with him would have made no difference. The fault, if fault there was, lay in poor Nicholls's obstinate determination to conceal from his chief the real state of affairs until too late. Nevertheless, Anthony blamed himself bitterly for neglect and short-sightedness, and felt the matter deeply. He wrote a frank and intimate account of it all to Honor with a certainty of finding sympathy and understanding, but he tore it up instead of posting it, thinking it selfish to spoil her Christmas with mournful news that would keep. Also there was a remote possibility that he might find her at the Villa when he returned.

With this sternly suppressed hope to divert his mind he refused to allow himself to hurry over the duties involved by Nicholls's death. He saw to the dead man's affairs with scrupulous care, and then to the disposal of the little laboratory and hospital, and to the gathered records of the work done there. The weather was atrocious, with cold rain and sleet and every possible hindrance to departure. The last mail by which he might get letters there arrived as he was starting, and it brought nothing from Honor, who indeed had written to Italy. Though Anthony admitted the possibility of this, yet that foolish little hope that would thrust

up its head from time to time, claimed here a point in its favour. Honor was very exact with the date of her letters and rarely failed him.

It was quite probable—or at least it was possible—that she might plan a surprise return on him. She was so quick to know what would give pleasure. The persistent little hope discounted her silence over the report Andrea had taken her of the grievous lack of her presence at the Villa. Through the long hours of a sleepless night journey, Anthony combated this ridiculous hope and it gained strength in the conflict.

He saw or rather the hope saw, how preposterous it was to dream that Honor would disregard the message, when the most elementary point in her character was her kindness. His pride which had died so hard, his passionate desire for the free gift of her love, were relegated to the limbo of lost emotions. The only sentiment that he retained was this forceful mastering hope, that should be no hope at all but a certainty, since Andrea had seen her and delivered his message.

He took out, and re-read the letter he had received from Andrea a week back. It contained only one reference to Honor.

"I have seen Honor to-day," wrote Andrea, "as no doubt she will have told you."

Andrea then had evidently no doubt as to Honor's readiness to speak on the subject. It was like Andrea to say no more, to do his part and wash his hands of the matter. Anthony smiled to himself to think *how* like Andrea it was!

But Honor had said nothing about the matter at all and his stern, practical judgment held this significant fact up in the face of the preposterous hope and emphasized it. He had sent a message to her instead of writing his desire, that she might not have the

embarrassment of refusing, if it did not accord with her own wishes. Her silence would be conclusive.

"Just so, but it would be so like Honor to come without warning," persisted the other voice that had no judgment about its roots, nothing but long, empty, passionate desire.

He dropped the conflict to concentrate his thoughts on her; of his first sight of her standing on the chair with the sparrow in her hands, a little shy, a little defiant, and withal so unlike his expectations. He thought of their next meeting, and the next, of the sudden sharp revelation of what it all meant to him that had dawned on him at Wallingford, of Wallingford and those first two months there.

Why had he let her go? This Gateways business was an extreme foolishness and yet—yet what else could he have done? Still, beneath the hope that spun such a cunning toil in his brain in tune to the rushing train, still beneath the breakdown of his pride that had lain in his surrender to Andrea's aid, there remained his longing, his hunger, his vague groping after an Honor who knew no gratitude or duty, nothing but imperious love and the need for it.

Sleep came to him fitfully and when he crossed the border he would rouse himself suddenly from a half-waking dream of Honor standing under the entrance arch at the Villa awaiting him, or in the big salon before Andrea's wonderful picture, or just out of clear space, holding out her hand to him.

Assuredly she would be there. His half-sleeping senses could not contend with the fast growing hope.

He tried to remember what it was Andrea was to tell her and failed in detail, adding and leaving out items, bewildering himself with it and falling back at last on the thought of Andrea's ability to convey impressions.

The journey necessitated a day's waiting in Vienna.

He got his mind into better control, and did some shopping, and called on an old friend at the Embassy. Yet in shopping he bought presents for Honor—and to his friend, in answer to enquiries, he stated he was not yet sure whether his wife was going to reach Guardini in time for Christmas or not.

With the next night's journey the foolish conflict began again.

For years afterwards Anthony never started on a prolonged train journey without recalling these two nights and days, with their long ceaseless altercation between common sense and irreducible hope.

He arrived at Brescia at eight in the morning and a motor was waiting for him. He had telegraphed for it in preference to waiting for the slow train to Volestra.

The morning air struck cold as they rushed across the Lombardy Plain before commencing the steep ascent towards Guardini, but it was not like the piercing, biting cold he had left behind in Roumania, and he found it invigorating after the wearying journey. The level land stretched out pale and luminous under the faint struggling efforts of the sun to make itself a window in the clouded sky. On the mountain heights the snow had already fallen heavily, and the far-off line of the Alps showed cloudlike against a grey background, but near at hand, on the lesser heights, there was only an aspect of desolation to proclaim the rule of winter. On the plain itself the bare mulberry trees appeared to weep over the heaped up leaves beneath them, and an atmosphere of stagnation, due rather to the day than the climate, brooded over the land. Anthony had himself well in hand so far but when they at last began the ascent, his pulses quickened as the speed of the motor slackened.

Would Honor really be there? His hope awoke and died a hundred times on the way. It was impossible

she should come without warning him, when soberly viewed. Then again Andrea would assuredly have mentioned in his letter the effect of his words, if there was not some compact between them as to silence. Never had the road from Brescia seemed so long. Still at length they did turn the corner in Volestra which brought them within sight of the Villa standing on the shoulder of the hill above them.

There were few windows looking out the road side, and there was no special sign of life about the place that told either way.

There was no Honor, however, in the entrance court. Anthony saw at once it would be more natural if she waited within. He forced himself to enter slowly, even in a dilatory manner of unconcern. He had wired that he was arriving that day but Leonello was not in the hall, and what more strange, Anchora was not there either.

With a sharp reaction of sentiment, he told himself he was a fool and had only been pretending to expect anyone, yet he was conscious that his heart beat hard as he crossed the court, and entered the door.

It was curiously silent inside and cold. Anthony was sensible at once of the chill air, and the sound of his own voice calling for Leonello was unreal and echoed uncannily.

Leonello came out instantly from the laboratory. He looked harassed and nervous, and was clearly surprised.

"You had not said you were going to motor," he stammered, "or I should have been on the look out. Let me help—"

He assisted Anthony to take off his coat in the same flurried, nervous way. "I counted on your arriving by the three train, or I would have lit the fire in the hall. The study is all ready though."

Anthony nodded silently. He felt himself under the influence of a bad dream from which he strove valiantly to awake.

He pushed open the door of his own room. The fire burnt brightly there, and there was no sense of chill. On the table there lay a pile of letters. He moved mechanically towards them.

What was it Leonello was saying?

"He gave no explanation, only he went and the girls too! It was the day after we received the news of Signor Nicholls's death—that is lamentable—so much promise, so much talent!—but he died like a soldier on duty, which is good. But Anchora—he cared nothing for the inconvenience, he went. I could find no one in the place free to come except Mario who promised his services as soon as you returned. I have managed very well for myself."

Anthony stood very still, trying to take in just what was told him, and to see reason in it. But all the time a little mocking voice at the back of his mind cried out with deafening clarity—"You fool! You fool!"

He heard himself questioning Leonello as some one in a distant room talking of unimportant subjects.

Leonello had no explanation to offer. Anchora and his daughters were gone, that was all. He insisted he knew no reason and plainly did, and he would not meet Anthony's eyes; he turned the conversation to the experiments he had made, to the general work, and finally, to the question of lunch. Anthony said "yes" to whatever it was he suggested, and presently found himself alone.

Anchora, who had served him faithfully for eight years, had gone without wages or warning. It ought to interest him, he knew.

He looked through the little pile of letters—there was one from Honor—the fourth from the top.

He sat down and opened it, and it surprised him to notice how steady his hands were.

It was her Christmas letter. It told him of Alice's engagement, of Lawrence's approaching concert, of the progress of her book, and expressed a hope that he and Nicholls would not have too dull a Christmas. Honor was not to blame if it read a trifle banal and even cruel under the circumstances; Anthony told himself so even as he read, but when he had finished it, he dropped the letter into the fire, and it seemed to him that some one laughed. He had never burnt a letter from Honor before.

CHAPTER VI.

DESTRUCTION.

DAY wore into night, and night to day again in lawful sequence, though Anthony Bradon was less aware of it than most men. A resolve and passion had come over him to complete here at Guardini his work in its book form. His old desire for it all to end and his thirst for freedom had died out before the significant silence that followed Andrea's message. He had referred to that once, and once only, in writing to Andrea, and he imagined he had put the matter from him with the sensible resignation that might be expected of a trained scientist. He did not yet recognise the spirit of reluctance that entered his pen when he took it up to write to Honor, nor interpreted rightly the reason why he ceased to be in any haste to have finished with his task, or the still more significant fact that he had also ceased to think of the future, or of Wallingford, or indeed, to plan any future at all, except the form, scope and limit of his book.

Thus hour after hour, day after day, night after night, he sat absorbed in that work, correcting, verifying, and comparing notes with those of Nicholls, troubled little by the extreme simplicity of the life in the little household and—so Leonello believed—oblivious of that still mounting hostility which surrounded them—a hostility which made not only women and children avoid his rare presence in the village, but shun the very shadow of his dwelling. Anthony, however, was not ignorant of it, only like that other wound which he nursed in silence, it hurt too sharply to be acknowledged. But that his own work or life

should be influenced by what he seemed powerless to avert never entered his head. Leonello's hints as to danger, and timid urgings for a quick departure, failed to meet with serious attention.

One morning, however, Leonello came to him with an unusually perturbed face, which would not be denied enquiry.

"Pietro Lugini's house was burnt down last night," Leonello explained. "No one knows how, but he has been sitting up with his sick wife for three days and nights; doubtless, he fell asleep and the candle guttered and set fire to something."

"And his wife?" demanded Anthony anxiously.

"They got her out but she died this morning from the shock."

Anthony walked up and down, horribly distressed.

"What a cruel tragedy! She was better yesterday, Pietro told me so."

Leonello flashed a sharp, anxious look at him.

"You saw Pietro?"

"I was passing the house and he was at the door, so I enquired. I hoped he would let me see her but he seemed jealous even of my shadow crossing the threshold."

"And did it—the shadow I mean?" stammered Leonello.

"Cross? Oh yes, the sun managed that!" He smiled a little, remembering Pietro's inhospitable behaviour even to his shadow. But Pietro was in trouble now, so he refrained from more remark on that.

Leonello hovered about in a hesitating manner, but Anthony gave him no more opportunity to speak and finally he went out with increased gravity, and real alarm on his face.

The theory of a wearied watcher and an overturned candle was, as Leonello guessed, the origin of the fire, but though that might be good enough reason for sane

minds, more ignorant ones required a greater elaboration of first causes.

Before night-fall such elaboration had been demanded, offered and accepted in the village.

It was a particularly dark night. Before going to bed Anthony stepped out on to the piazza and gazed into the void before him. Not a star broke the cold blackness of the sky. The immense chill shadow of night had fallen over the world, denuded of jewels and filled with strange brooding, distorted thoughts that appeared to make themselves bodies out of darkness.

This strange sense of shaping force pressed on Anthony himself, and something beyond the cold of the night made him shiver. Dissatisfaction, antagonism, and faint implacable anger with conditions, rose and fell across his mind as vast shadows cast by little objects. It was borne in upon him that the Villa Guardini was no longer a good place in which to work, that it might even be wise to transplant himself elsewhere.

But everything connected with his work was here at hand. It meant incalculable waste of time, energy, and labour, to move himself just yet—and for a mere fancy born of a dark night! It would be an intolerable weakness.

Darkness was nothing but absence of light. It was childish to resent or fear a mere negation. He went indoors, and closed the window, conscious of the resentment and displeased at it.

So to bed and to sleep—the one willing negation of conscious existence.

The thoughts that had tormented the night took corporal form, dark outlines in darkness which drew steadily nearer the Villa by way of the upper terraces where Honor used to lie and dream.

The door leading to the hall from these was easy to open even for shadowy fingers.

Stealthily, very stealthily, these shadows formed out of darkness crept across the hall. It is the quality of such shadows that they move so very quietly that their footfall cannot reach the ears of sleep.

Anthony's two rooms and the laboratory opened into the hall and also communicated with each other. Leonello slept in a room half way down the stair leading to the next floor. Of this the shadows seemed aware, for some crept that way and dealt in no shadowy fashion with lock and key.

But it was towards the laboratory that the moving shapes mostly hastened, that spot where dark and mysterious things were made to yield their secrets to the light, where, in their ignorance, the peasants of the village believed were woven those spells which compelled the absence of that good-omened visitor to their homes, who had brought them fortune and prosperity, in whose absence triple disasters had fallen on them. The originator of those spells must be dealt with when they were destroyed, or their power would hold good. Such was their fantastic belief.

To this long narrow room the greater number made their way and broke its silence and darkness with instant light and confusion. At the first crash of destruction Anthony had sprung up in bed to be pressed down again by hands—many hands—and held there in the darkness helpless, with a towel across his mouth, seeing nothing and hearing only those shivering, shattering noises in the distance.

He could not calculate the number of assailants round him, or who they were. They would not let him speak, the towel was their guard, and later when the signal was given, it would be their instrument. They would not let him see, the darkness was their protection there. At first, he made wild efforts to

free himself, but then lay quiet waiting a chance, for they held him and had not tied him. They grew restless and fearful themselves in the darkness, one fingered his long knife wistfully; at length another went to see if the destruction was complete. He left the door ajar and a gleam of fierce light came in as he disappeared. One of those left cried out and flung up his arm to guard his face, and another—the one with the knife—quicker-witted, dragged a sheet over Anthony's head. It was his eyes they feared more than his recognition, but the momentary loosened hold offered a chance, and Anthony tore himself from them, gained the door and slammed it behind him, before they could disentangle themselves from the scattered bedclothes.

He burst into the laboratory, into the blazing light of the unshielded electric lights, into the chaos of broken furniture, smashed glass, over-turned bottles, and spilt liquor streaming in wasteful riot over the floor amongst the torn papers, books and records, the whole machinery and tabled results of eight years' labour.

There were men—or rather as devils they appeared at the moment, adding with furious energy to this growing pile of destruction, jumping on it, senselessly beating it, cursing it, their shadows black and terrific in the crude fierce light against the white walls.

One man had a book in his hand to which he was endeavouring to set light with a reckless expenditure of matches. Lighted matches and book fell to the ground together as Anthony burst in on them. Instantly they—one and all—rushed with discordant cries of terror to the door with bent shielded heads, as if his eyes held lightnings to blast them. The book falling, caught in the wire of a movable lamp and brought it and a large glass jar full of spirits of wine down on the wreckage, with a smash of splintering

glass, just over the spot where a still burning match licked at a heap of torn papers.

Anthony had barely time to shout a warning before a white sheet of flame shot to the ceiling from wall to wall, a curtain of death if any had been caught behind it. In a moment the place was a blazing furnace and the roar of the flames played a fierce bass to the shrill, agonised cry of fear.

Anthony turned at the last moment and made one dash for the book still lying uninjured beyond the flame fringe, but as he caught it a greedy tongue of fire licked it out of his hand, and he reeled back into the hall with singed blackened sleeve and arm, and a scorched face.

A frantic struggling group of men flung themselves on the front door, forgetting the road of their entrance, and nullifying their own efforts to get out in their wild panic.

Anthony remembered there were grenades somewhere, and a hand fire-engine, and shouted demands for help and water. He had slammed the laboratory door after him, but a little thin streak of hungry fire was creeping out beneath it making its way across the hall. No one responded to him but there was a rush of air as the big door opened at last and a stampede of flying feet, and then the sound of fire had it all its own way.

Leonello, who after desperate effort, had burst open his locked door, knew where grenades and water could be found and the two men were quickly reinforced by the priest and doctor and Mario, though Anthony never knew how or when they arrived. They fought the fire inch by inch. It lapped up the three adjoining rooms, part of the hall, and the rooms immediately below. They fought it with water, earth and sand, and when they were at last victors, there seemed no reason at all why the enemy had given way to them,

no, nor why they should have toiled against him, so Anthony thought dumbly, as they stood there blackened, worn, inhuman-looking figure in the cold dawn.

He tried to say as much and failed, and then without any apparent sequence of events found himself on the sofa in the long salon with the doctor dressing his now aggressively painful arm.

In the austere morning light the room looked chili and bare, and the acrid biting smell of the smoke precluded any possible mental escape from the disaster. The doctor, whose hitherto unfriendly attitude had completely disappeared in the excitement of the event, urged Anthony to leave the Villa and come back with him, and could make nothing of his persistent refusal. There were other helpers now and an efficient guard to watch that the enemy did not wake from slumber. But Anthony, though he could give no reason, would not leave the place of his ruined work. Argument appeared to distress him, so in the end the doctor administered a dose of bromide and left him in Leonello's care, promising to return in the course of the morning.

Anthony's tortured brain fought against the insidious bromide for a long time, but at last physical exhaustion sided with the doctor and he slept. All his life after, he remembered the cold bitterness of the awakening that evening, the petrifying misery of the next two days, and his own apathetic futile efforts to reckon with the situation. He could not bring himself to go outside the Villa, or long desert the grave of his ruined hopes. He knew from the first nothing could be saved of his work and yet he could scarcely bear to order the removal of the débris where so much lay buried.

Leonello made up a bed for him in the salon which, though it was so near those damaged rooms below the laboratory, was more shut off from the visible

evidence of the fire than any other room in the house. On Thursday, Anchora crept back and proffered help in a shamefaced way, to be roughly repulsed by Leonello who suspected him. Mario was at the Signor's disposal and the priest, Father Gabriel, sent a woman who was efficient and faithful, so Leonello was comparatively free to serve Anthony with undivided attention. His devotion, his common-sense, and the way he managed reporters and curious visitors and official demands, was beyond reproach, yet Anthony could hardly at times bear his presence. His unceasing consciousness of the catastrophe and the magnitude which it assumed in his eyes, and his too apparent sympathy, only added to Anthony's own heartbreaking sense of loss. He could neither turn his mind from it nor in those first two days, feel the necessity to make any effort to do so.

Such business, however, as had to be gone into with police and magistrates, he performed with such absence of emotion that the doctor watched him with hourly renewed anxiety, in expectation of a breakdown which never came.

On Thursday morning Leonello reminded him that the news might now be in the English papers and he roused himself to telegraph to Honor. That afternoon a wire from England arrived, and he tore it open with a sensation almost divorced from pain for the first time since Tuesday. He imagined it must be from Honor. It seemed a familiar chill to find it was from Andrea.

"Is the picture safe? Hope you are not much damaged. Andrea."

He was sitting opposite the great picture and he turned his eyes to it thoughtfully—Andrea was after all quite right. It had a value that would outlast either of their lives. Still there were other pictures of Andrea's scattered up and down the world, and he could

paint more. But could he, Anthony, regather that hardly won knowledge of his into intelligible form? He told Leonello to telegraph as to the safety of the picture, but since he made no mention of himself Leonello also refrained from mentioning him. There was a sheaf more telegrams which had to be despatched and Anthony desired Leonello to go to Brescia and send them off himself. Leonello went unwillingly, he could not believe it wise to leave Signor Bradon, but he also could not flatly refuse to do his will.

Anthony was alone again—with Andrea's picture for company, however, now. It had been there all the time, of course, but he had not been aware of it. In a curious manner he now became also aware of the room itself, of chairs and tables, of the bed Leonello had arranged for him, of the plain walls and the great picture at the end of the room.

And he sat looking at it wondering.

What did Andrea know about failure, loss, and the intolerable loneliness of personal misfortune? By what subtle power had he transfixed and isolated that fleeting moment from all existence, that the beholder might have leisure to see and understand something in the chaotic darkness about him. There was that draggled, tattered scarecrow of a man, hanging in peril, spent, alone, deserted, claiming a victory solely by the forward gaze in his undaunted eyes that acknowledged no defeat. Then there was that magical light on the distant mountain tops at the extreme edge of the picture. It was a clever arrangement of contrasts of colour to intensify the darkness—so Andrea had once explained to him with his half concealed, mocking smile. Well, there was the light anyhow, for whatever purpose! Anthony turned from the picture with a sigh.

All through the interminable hours of the previous night he had held his memory at the judgment bar,

questioning, probing, shirking no issue. And memory had shrunk back affrighted, shamed and wrapped herself in a spurious garment of humility, repudiating the responsibility he would thrust upon her. How could he ever hope to make good the loss that was his? He had corresponded with so few, discussed so little with his confrères; Leonello was only a subordinate, a dealer with results rather than causes. Nicholls, who might have helped, was dead.

Anthony was clear as to his own conclusions and intentions, but those calculated records and proofs and that half-finished manuscript, where, bit by bit, he had set free that fickle jade memory from her burden—those were what were irreplaceable.

No, there was no light ahead for him anyhow.

The trouble that weighed upon him was not only the destruction of his work and the attempt on his life, he hardly realised how great had been that danger; there was another failure bound up in it that was bitter in its revelation, a failure to understand and correctly estimate his fellow-beings, these very people he had considered in the light of friends.

His mind shrank before the spirit of their ignorant and ferocious cruelty as a frightened child from its first experience of an unjust world. He had pitied these village folk, felt for them the interest and respect one feels for children and they had betrayed his faith in them. He set little store on the fact that he had worked for their benefit, and brought no charge against them on that account. Altruism had not been the primary meaning of his work, but what did appal him was, that they had set loose on him an evil force, the very existence of which seemed to him as incredible as physical pain to a Christian Scientist. It was like the eruption of an extinct volcano or the resurrection of an antediluvian animal.

Dishonest dealing, jealousy, slander, these he had

encountered and walked on unheeding, but ignorance and hate, and the lust of destruction—he could not come to terms with them. It was all very dark indeed, no light of any sort!

His weary mind shook itself free from this tangle of thought and, roving in a futile fashion over the damaged house, he came to a stand before that curtained doorway leading to the spoilt rooms where Honor would have been sleeping had she been there—but she had not been, thank God! He was conscious of a desire to thank something, it was an instinct which found mere circumstance too impersonal for its need. Then his mind revolted against an admission of conscious power in this cruel welter of things.

He moved restlessly. His arm was acutely painful again though he had not noticed it before.

He wished he had not allowed Honor to enter his thoughts, for here too, was another failure, or he would not be alone now. Everywhere round him meant failure, loss; and to stimulate his mind, the sharp prick of physical pain! On top of which Andrea wanted to know if his picture was safe! The vicious circle was complete. He had come back to the starting place. He got up, crossed the room, and stood before the picture, a little inimical towards it now.

A feature in it that he had never seen before struck him. From where that man lay on the perilous path, those undaunted eyes of his could see nothing of that glory of light on the mountain tops. There was nothing to pierce the shadow and mist and darkness round him, but the unbroken faith of his own soul.

Anthony was sharply aware that he was standing, which he was forbidden to do, and he dragged up a chair for he wanted to understand this discovery. Little by little the full force of the intent, the subtle soul of the thing entered into him, and he understood it as Andrea had himself understood it in conception. It

was no longer a subject but an eternal truth exemplified in paint and canvas, in arrangements of light and shade—a captive expression of a truth lying deeper than any theological creed, that truth of the eternal unquenchable faith of the ego, to achieve itself. All the failures of the ages have not quenched it, all the success (God keep us humble before the thought of their pettiness) of the centuries cannot satiate it, ambition apes it, religion patronises it, agnosticism makes capital out of it, but it lives there in the deep of man's being, unquenchable, divine, the guarantee of his origin, the pledge of his ultimate goal!

Leonello returned to find a difference in his patient though all Anthony said was:

“We had better send to-morrow for Malesto to clear up all the mess and put the place right again. That at least is rebuildable.”

CHAPTER VII.

LAWRENCE.

As the day of Lawrence's first public appearance drew near, Bertini sought to instill into his pupil some of the hopeful confidence he felt himself. Lawrence said little—too little, Bertini thought, of his possible success or failure; he worked assiduously and avoided all excitement even to the extent of refusing a particularly amusing supper at the Savoy with his father. If he were nervous he did not betray himself in words. There was, however, an element of fatalism about him which Bertini mistrusted. He did not consider it enough that Lawrence should know he *could* succeed, he wanted to feel the more imperious "will" succeed behind him. He took great pains over the concert arrangements and succeeded in getting two other performers of sufficient prominence and popularity to support his pupil. These were Miss Gonzel, the popular contralto, and Wetz the violinist. The latter was a great feather in Bertini's cap, not the less because Wetz had offered himself to play. He had met Lawrence once, heard him play and talked to him for perhaps ten minutes. In that time he had used his eyes and his abnormal senses of reading character and Lawrence had attracted him. The general public would go anywhere to hear Wetz play, so Bertini folded his hands and felt more than content. The little Steinway Hall, which was all they had ventured to take, would certainly be full and there was no point in overcrowding the items. Lawrence must be allowed room himself.

The taking of the hall and advertising of the con-

cert had been a matter of considerable anxiety to Bertini. He mooted the point to Lawrence with the idea of referring it back to his father, but Lawrence refused point blank, and matters were rather at a deadlock when Honor first heard of the difficulty. She wrote to Bertini without telling Lawrence, pledging herself for all expenses and telling him merely to let Lawrence know that it was arranged.

It was not till about ten days before the concert that Andrea was seized with a sudden fit of practical interest and getting no information out of Lawrence, turned to Honor for news. She told him plainly what she had done and he frowned ominously.

"I forbade Lawrence to take any more help from Anthony," he said.

"It's not Anthony—it's me, and Lawrence knows nothing about it; he just thinks it's the company who are doing it, between them; he's not so practical as you," she added, with gentle scorn.

Andrea, who was painting, continued to work silently for a few minutes, then laid aside his brushes and went over to the writing table. After some hunting he found a cheque book shut up in a blotting pad.

"How much have you guaranteed?" he demanded, without looking round.

Honor told him. She had swiftly reviewed the position and decided it was for Andrea's good that he should be generous to the boy. He dropped the cheque into her lap as he went back to his easel.

"You will see your money back," she said cheerfully; "the tickets are selling very well."

"I don't want it back. Bertini will have other expenses to pay, there are other performers I suppose?"

"They are giving their services," explained Honor. "Lawrence is a popular being, you know, Andrea."

"So are street organs with some people—and Christmas Numbers!"

Lawrence knew nothing of all this. Indeed, at this time, either he was more intent on his music than ever, or he purposely avoided them both, at least, when they were together. Sometimes Honor went up to his music room, however, and he would play to her.

As she listened she would let go the pretence to which she clung, that there was no occasion for the stabbing little pain that made secret assaults on her peace. She would allow it freedom to do its worst here, neither resisting nor ignoring it, and she was the better for this acceptance of what was, after all, a part of her present existence.

Lawrence would play his own music to her, music he would never have dared to play to Bertini, and through all of it would run that passionate note of longing so nearly allied to completion and ever falling short of it. But now and then he would have an odd tricksey mood and played queer elfin fancies that bubbled with laughter.

He ended one such tune one afternoon, and turned to see her eyes shining and her face dimpled with a smile of childish enjoyment.

"It would be good to feel like that, wouldn't it?" he demanded abruptly.

"One does! It's all the funny, silly little childish jokes that make one laugh because they are silly, you know."

"I don't know. I didn't make jokes when I was a child."

He wheeled round to the piano and repeated a few chords.

It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him he was not much more than a child now, but she refrained, for after all, was he? There was nothing at all childish or immature about his art; Bertini had been right as to that.

Quite suddenly, Honor found herself wondering who his mother had been and what she was like.

It made so uncanny a coincidence with her thought that she jumped when Lawrence said in his quiet, even voice:

"My mother was a singer, you know; only she hadn't time to be well known. She might have been great. She always hoped I should be musical."

"Her hope is well fulfilled," answered Honor softly.

She wanted to say more. It was not diffidence that held her back, she felt that Lawrence wished to speak of the dead, of himself and his life. What restrained her was rather a dim feeling of loyalty to Andrea, or perhaps a half conscious dread that danger to their friendship lay in too much knowledge!

Lawrence seemed to recognise this and abandoned his mood of revelation.

When she had gone (Andrea was away that afternoon, hence her prolonged stay in Lawrence's room; he did not flatter himself it was otherwise) and he was once more alone, he ceased playing and sat brooding over the fire, but it was not of his mother he thought, nor Andrea, nor even Honor. It was of Anthony Bradon.

If he should ever succeed in winning something for himself out of the world it would be Anthony Bradon who first made it possible to him, the man who might not only have ignored him but disfranchised him of his name. He had no especial reason to love the name, still he had borne it from childhood, and if his father had never let him long forget how poor a claim he had on it, the head of the house had never, by word nor sign, reminded him of the fact. Lawrence was not particularly sensitive over the matter, for his upbringing had not been of the kind that fostered the growth of strictly moral ideas, still he was perfectly aware of the disabilities that might have been

his and which, so far, he had miraculously escaped. Occasionally, he wondered idly what would have happened to him if Andrea had left him, a boy of twelve, to shift for himself in the little German town where his mother had died. There was not much point, however, in wondering. He would have come through a musician under whatever circumstances fate had flung him.

All this, nevertheless, made no rebate on the gratitude he felt towards Anthony Bradon for the friendly hand extended to him.

It was a distinct sentiment from his adoration of Honor. Anthony had supplied the first material needs of his art, but Honor supplied the immaterial needs of his soul without which he had been in danger of starvation.

Still he regarded his debt to Anthony as overwhelming.

It was in his power to pay a little of it, and he shirked the opportunity like a coward! Shirked it as the most devote of worshippers might shirk from practical experiment of the power of some cherished relic, as too sacred for common use.

Early in the New Year Andrea had given Lawrence a pile of letters to answer for him as was occasionally his way. It was due to an oversight, however, on Andrea's part that a letter from Anthony was amongst them. Lawrence read the letter but he did not answer it, nor did he mention to his father that it had been amongst the others. He merely gave it back with those which were to be returned to Andrea, who thrust the lot into a drawer unexamined.

There was one sentence in this letter which Lawrence could not forget. It ran thus:

"You see how wise I was in sending a message rather than writing direct to Honor, I am infinitely

obliged to you for so managing that she does not realise she has actually refused me anything."

What had been the message and what had Honor refused him?

Lawrence, with his hyper-sensitive mind had read between every line in the rest of the restrained sentences of the letter. He was confident he knew what the message had been, what he did not know was if it had been delivered.

It would be quite easy to ascertain by asking Honor, but that was the one thing he could not bring himself to do, even in face of the debt he owed Anthony Bradon.

Lawrence knew with a knowledge born of instinct and love, that, with or without a book, Honor should not be here in London immersed in her work and in Andrea, and Anthony be in Italy alone. He had always known this from the first. At Gateways he had tried to father the blame of it on to Anthony himself in an unconvinced sort of way, but the letter enlightened him, when put beside that secret shadow which had fallen on Honor, and which that attentive instinct of his, so keenly alert where she was concerned, had quickly perceived.

He could not himself find any reason as to why Anthony, if he wanted her so badly, should not have plainly told her so, but he was also sure that the elder man's outlook on life must embrace a wider horizon than his own, and if he preferred to trust Andrea with a message rather than write direct to Honor, his reasons were doubtless good, save only in the faulty knowledge he showed as to the suitability of his messenger.

The trouble to him lay in whether the message had been given or not. It was a dishonour that stung him to the soul, if it had not been given. But if it had and Honor had turned a deaf ear to it?

That was the insidious creeping little fear that

turned him coward. The fear that Honor might be accepting this separation from her husband by deliberate choice. It was the pivot on which all turned.

He told himself with passionate emphasis that it was not, and could not be so; yet he could not face the possibility of discovering a flaw in the object of his worship, and he lacked the courage to learn whether it existed or not.

On Honor and on his conception of Honor's goodness rested his whole moral code. For her to fail him now would need a readjustment of his outlook which he could not contemplate without terror. At this particular point in his career it would be suicidal—so he told himself in poor excuse for his weakness.

He can hardly be blamed if his devotion to Honor was coupled with a possible suspicion of her entire perfection. She and Anthony represented to him the only two beings in the world who lived and moved in the same exalted atmosphere from which he drew his inspirations. It was no question of morality but rather of a different world in which he desired to believe as ardently as the most miserable outcast in a future heaven.

He could ask Honor no question about that message—not till the concert was over! He needed her there for that, needed her desperately, and what he contemplated stopped at nothing short of sending her back to Anthony at once!

Andrea's son cried in his heart for forgiveness from Anthony for his lagging gratitude.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSAGE DELIVERED.

IN spite of Mr. Timmins's protests, Alice would have nothing in the way of a show wedding. She postponed naming the day as long as could be, in the secret hope that Anthony Bradon might be in England by the end of February.

She appeared in Honor's sitting room early one morning towards the end of January with rather a hostile air, on the pretence of seeing how a new maid had performed her task of dusting. She held Honor's powers of "household observation" in good natured contempt.

"I thought Anthony was coming back this month?" she asked with excessive casualness.

Honor pricked her finger with a paper fastener and sucked it ruefully.

"Isn't he?" persisted Alice.

"He's not ready. Mr. Nicholls's death has rather upset his plans, you see."

"Then you don't expect him,"

"I haven't the faintest idea when he's coming." She paused, and added in a carefully even voice: "I have not heard from him this week."

Alice gave her a swift glance, half opened her mouth to say something, and shut it again rather tightly.

Then as she was going out of the door she remarked:

"I shall be married on the twenty-eighth."

"Goodness me, how quickly you settle things! Does Mr. Timmins know?"

"He'll know this afternoon. I'm sorry about Lawrence's concert, but it can't be helped."

She went away and Honor attempted to take up her interrupted work again. The book was actually finished. It had been approved by Silverman, and returned to her for some trifling alterations. Honor had had her hour of exultant joy. She knew she had done better than ever before, though with the reverent humility of the true artist, she knew also it did not touch that first clear conception of her theme that had come to her on that April day nearly a year ago. Still it was something to have been able to handle it at all, and know it was not absolute failure. The hour of joy had been very real.

Then the following morning she had awakened with a sudden realisation of a flaw in it, a point that ran contrary to the sustained thought of the whole. For some hours more she struggled to shut the realization of this out of her mind. She put the neat typed copy out of her sight, deferring even the trifling change she had to make. But her passion for her work was too real and too sincere to be denied, and she ended by sitting down and calmly examining the fault. The longer she looked at it the more startlingly vivid it became. It was amazing that she could have allowed her interest in her own plot to blind her to the falseness of the situation she had created.

For one ghastly hour it seemed to her the whole year's work was wasted effort. Then a glimmer of light dawned. Her quick mind caught hold of the first faulty thread, unravelled it and saw how, with comparatively little alteration, the matter could be readjusted.

But the "comparatively little" meant some weeks of work and the book, against her own wishes, had been already advertised to appear early in March. Her publishers would be seriously annoyed. They would

tell her it's a bad thing to delay the appearance of an announced book, that the interest created at some expense would wane and grow stale; moreover, the alteration she contemplated was not one which would affect the popularity of the book; the flaw would be visible only to the discerning reader, and it meant the sacrifice of a particularly dramatic scene. No, it would be no use to expect Silverman to be sympathetic about it!

But Honor was none the less determined to make it. It was a question of artistic morality, and of that irrefutable love of truth which was the particular charm of her writing. She must work early and late, despite of Silverman, or endamage the inmost soul of this child of her mind on its first entrance into its world.

She wrote to Silverman, explained her point firmly, promised to do her best to keep time, but no more. She received an indignant, frenzied answer by return, stating the difficulties that delay would occasion, and the complication that would ensue over the American copyright, expressing their own complete satisfaction with the book as it was, and entreaties to let well alone. But by that time she was already hard at work.

On the morning that Alice so abruptly announced the date of her marriage, Honor had just begun to realise the difficulties of the task that lay before her, and to see how infinitely worth while it was to do it. Alice's short visit vexed her less from the question of interruption than from the fact that it forced on her mind the unwelcome fact that she had had no letter from Anthony for ten days. Her own letter to him lay in a drawer unfinished. She had sent, instead, a card merely asking if all was well. That was four days ago. She might get an answer to-morrow. Anthony's silence, Alice's wedding, Lawrence's concert—all these things seemed to combine against her. She felt unreasonably angry with the world in general. It

seemed to her she asked very little of it, only peace to work and keep her word to Silverman, if it were humanly possible, and how could she do so with a mind disturbed? She had planned a certain amount of work for that morning, but there was nothing mechanical in it, it required hard thinking, and her mind refused to settle down to it.

She gave it up at last, and put the manuscript away angrily and went out, with the half realised intention of going to Abbey Road. When she got as far as the garden gate, however, she paused, considered a moment, and returned to the house. When she started again, she carried three chapters of the book, some notes, and a supply of blank paper. She went on her way with a slight colour in her face and a suspicion of hardness about her mouth.

"I can write there and forget things," she said to herself, with an uneasy defiance of some unknown objecter. "Andrea never interrupts, he helps."

Andrea appeared to take her coming as a matter of course, though it was an unusual hour for her. He had been going out, but he did not tell her so.

"I want to work here this morning," Honor told him straightly; "and you must give me lunch. I'm altering the book—it's an awful trouble—I'll tell you afterwards, but just let me work here now."

He nodded comprehendingly, swept a table clear of papers, pushed it into the right light, placed materials and a chair ready for her without a word, and then drew himself up and made her a bow.

"Madame est servie!"

Honor had to laugh but she sighed a little too, as she took the chair, partly from relief.

"You always do just what I want," she said gratefully. "Nice person!"

He was behind her and she missed his rapid change

of expression as he laughed and patted her on the shoulder.

"Work away, don't mind me. I'm working myself. If you disturb me you must go!"

He did indeed go over to a canvas and take up his tools, but he hardly used them.

A whole gamut of new emotions arrayed themselves in his mind. He found himself weighing problems that had never seriously occurred to him before. The world seemed for the moment to be swinging round and he wondered confusedly where, when this giddiness left him, he would be standing with regard to his intended outlook.

The moments slipped by. Honor continued to write steadily; the room was quiet and peaceful, the bowls of narcissus scented the warm air, and in some subtle way added to their comfort. Andrea stopped pretending to paint. He sat still and smoked, and his hands were shaking a little. His fertile, rapid imagination visioned many possibilities to itself and his calculating self weighed and measured them by the standard of his own gain or loss.

He could see the back of Honor's head repainted in an old mirror that hung on the wall behind her, and he fixed his eyes on it. This probably was the origin of his picture "The Lady in the Mirror," but it did not cross his conscious thought as a possible painting at the time.

The thing most apparent to him was the shortness of the time that remained in which Honor would come like this to Abbey Road, unless—unless!—

Was it worth while taking down the beautiful picture he had enjoyed contemplating so long, and hanging it in another light—to have it by him always?

Honor lifted her head and turned to him with a smile in her eyes.

"It's quite easy after all," she said. "One has only to alter little things. You are a magician, Andrea—it's useful to have a magician as a friend!"

Andrea took up his palette. The world had stopped spinning round and he knew where he was standing for the minute. It may have been the magic of her voice that had sobered his senses, so that he could almost laugh at the folly that had died out with one look from her clear, friendly eyes. If he did not laugh, it was that he was momentarily taken aback, as one who had been reproved for walking about church with his hat on. He was "bareheaded" now and would have preferred to forget he had ever been anything else.

He again abandoned his pretence at work and went over to the fire with the morning paper, which he had not yet read. Honor was once more engrossed and did not even look up as he passed.

The silence in the room became more noticeable, but it partook of the restful silence of green open spaces.

Andrea turned the page of the paper, glanced at the headings, and sat upright with a quick look in the direction of Honor. Then he again read the paragraph that had caught his eye, read it slowly three times and continued to sit there, his eyes wandering from the paper to the fire speculatively. His impulse was to thrust the paper into the blaze, but here again his active brain weighed and measured the matter from the standpoint of his own advantage.

This then was the very last time in all probability that Honor would so invade his house, would sit there in quiet intimacy teaching him in the silence new strange things, even some sort of humility and abasement.

He refolded the paper and leaning back quietly thrust it under some magazines on a table behind him, and reached instead for "Punch," to occupy his

apparently idle attention. He was fully assured that Honor had not noticed more than the fact that he had taken up a paper, if that! But the paragraph he had read was quite clearly lined on his mind. The letters overlaid the pages of "Punch" and accorded ill with the printed humour.

"OUTRAGE IN NORTHERN ITALY.

"The Villa Guardini, near Brescia, where Mr. Bradon has been carrying on his important research into the origin of pellagra, has been wrecked by the villagers. It is reported that the laboratory and all notes and records have been completely burnt. Mr. Bradon himself is slightly injured."

It was a dull, bald statement of facts but it gave Andrea sufficient food for thought. He would have to tell Honor this, in the end he knew, but he wanted to choose his own place and time of telling.

Why had not Anthony written or wired? He might indeed be on his way back. How much was the vague "injury" referred to?

To-day was Thursday, and it had happened, as far as he could make out, on Monday night. They ought to have heard.

Honor laid down her pen and folded her hands behind her head and tilted her chair a little way.

"It's worth it, it's worth it," she murmured ecstatically. "Andrea, virtue may be its own reward but it's a good enough one sometimes."

She proceeded to tell him the history of the past two days ending with the interruption of the morning.

"What a horribly cross person I should have been without you to fall back on," she exclaimed penitently, but with an adorable smile at him.

"What put you out besides Alice's intrusion?" he questioned more to gain time than from curiosity.

She came over to him and knelt down by the fire, holding out her hands to the blaze, and confessed herself slowly.

"I think I was cross because I had not heard from Anthony this week."

Andrea made a little uneasy movement. He would have given some of his best inspirations to hand over his inevitable mission to another. If she had known the thing and had come to him for comfort it would have been another matter, but here she was at his feet, as it were, with all her youth, her faith, the glow of achievement on her and her wealth of internal happiness, and what was coming would alter it all, so that she would never be quite the same again. His mind gauged the possibilities with horrible vividness. He hated the thought of it; he hated the paper and those fools of peasants! Anthony too! How they all combined to spoil his beautiful picture. She was happy, and content, as things were, here with him. Why should he tell her now? A few more hours would make little difference and he wanted one more sketch of her just as she was, before anything marred her youth. Then fate settled the matter by taking it out of his dilatory hands. Lawrence opened the door and came in. His face was white and excited, and he did not see Honor who was hidden from him by the big sofa. He held a crushed up paper in his hand.

"Have you seen this?" he demanded quickly; "about Guardini? Mr. Bradon's house is destroyed—I was out and got a paper by chance and—"

Honor had sprung up and he saw her, saw too his father's cold, furious face silencing the words that already were dying on his lips.

"Honor!" he faltered. "Honor here? You have heard then? I was going to you."

"Heard what?" demanded Honor.

Her face had gone a dull uniform tint and lost all

expression. It was as if some hand had wiped off her youth and left a blank for a new writing.

Andrea found his wits.

"What are you talking about?" he asked roughly. "You are frightening Honor."

Since Lawrence was here and had begun, let him bear the brunt of it. He, too, at that moment, was something to hate—a spoiler of his beautiful picture.

But Lawrence had read in that first furious glance Andrea's knowledge of what had occurred, and he looked sharply round the room.

"The paper was on the sofa, I saw it there this morning. Where have you put it?"

Honor took a step forward.

"Lawrence, please tell me."

She caught Andrea's arm as she spoke, as if seeking support. Lawrence saw that, too. Piercing terror tore discretion and judgment from him. The agony of antagonism that ate into his soul like fire, goaded him to tempestuous words, met, braved, and repulsed the fury in his father's eyes.

"They have wrecked Guardini; burnt all his work, his books, his notes—everything, hurt him, ruined him, and you are *here*, in this house of all places in the world with him, you and he together!"

His voice held a note of terror. Something more ominously dreadful than his hate for his father struggled in his soul.

Her dazed eyes travelled from one to the other.

"Guardini? Anthony hurt? When did you see it? How do you know?"

"He knew," cried Lawrence, swiftly as judgment, turning on his father. "He must have seen it in the paper, that's why he had hidden it away there under those books, for fear you'd see. He knew and he did not tell you!"

Andrea pulled out the paper and spoke quickly and assuredly.

"Honor, my dear, I did know—I was waiting to tell you—to break it more gently than this, I had just seen it—since you came. Anthony isn't badly hurt at all and no doubt it's all exaggerated."

He found the place and handed it to her, and she read it once dully, and a second time with fierce interest.

Andrea had made one point good against Lawrence's incriminating attack.

The atmosphere of the room that a few moments ago had been so peaceful seemed to ring with discords in this clashing of three minds against three sets of circumstances. No one spoke, yet the silence seemed to vibrate with shrill sounds. At length Honor gripped the meaning of the thing that had happened and she turned mechanically to the chair where her out-of-door clothes lay and began putting on her hat.

There was something childlike and piteous in the droop of her mouth and her shaking hands that made such poor progress with the hat.

"I must go," she said half to herself, but her bewildered eyes sought Andrea's. "I must go to-night, There may be a message waiting at home now."

She wanted him to confirm this thought, but he said nothing.

The unfaceable terror that had momentarily gripped Lawrence died out. He gave a deep gasp as a man near drowning who comes to air and life again.

She was putting on her coat now, and then suddenly she let it fall.

"Andrea," she cried, with a curious thin quality in her voice, "Andrea, it was Monday, and this is Thursday, and he has never even wired to me!

Without warning, desolation came on her, and she was weeping in his arms, clinging to him like a child.

The penalty for her rapid vivid imagination taking full toll of her senses.

"He never told me—he never let me know. He does not want me—even now. How can I go?"

So she sobbed with the pitiful confusion of a child. All the pent up wounded feelings of her heart breaking down before this last apparent overwhelming proof of her husband's little need of her.

"He never expected you'd hear so soon. No doubt he's written. It would be much more like Anthony! He'd never expect you to rush off at once. Let me wire to him for you."

"No. Don't let him, Honor. Do it yourself, and then go."

Andrea turned, held Honor closer, and said very quietly:

"Damn you! Can't you go?"

But Lawrence came nearer. He did not glance at his father but at Honor, and his eyes glistened strangely.

Honor lifted her head and was filled with fear.

"Don't trust him with a wire, Honor. He forgets messages. Ask him what was the message he had for you when he came back from Italy last? Ask him why he did not give it you? You *were* wanted always! It's he who made you think otherwise! Oh, I know it, I know it!" His voice rose with terrible assurance, it had no quality of Andrea's in it now, it was harsh, high, and rapid. He went on swiftly, defying interruption by the force of his passion.

"I don't know why Mr. Bradon trusted him to tell you what he might have written himself—but he did, and *he* never told you. Say you never heard, Honor—say it—say it!"

His urgency was overwhelming.

"I hadn't any message!" She freed herself from Andrea, and moved a step away to look at him. "Was

there a message, Andrea? Is Lawrence mad or mistaken, or is it just true?"

His will was to deny it, but his judgment scoffed at the thought. Would she not know as soon as she met Anthony? Lies wouldn't serve him then! A little bitter laugh from Lawrence quenched a dim sense of remorse.

"Look at him, Honor. Make him tell you what the message was, now it's too late. Then go away from us and never come here again. Don't you see we are destroying you between us? He got you back to England—I don't know how, but he did. He's kept you here in London, again I don't know how, do you? He's stood between you and Mr. Bradon all the time, and I knew it, and have said nothing. Tell him—Mr. Bradon—that, so that he'll know what we are really like—my father and I, and keep you out of our way."

She stopped him at last with a slight gesture.

"You haven't answered me, Andrea."

She knew it was true, but she dared take nothing less than his own self condemnation.

Andrea picked up the coat she had dropped and held it out for her.

"I needed you quite as much as he did," he said coolly. "I should have sent you back when I did not want you any more."

Stunned, almost paralysed for the moment, Honor was only conscious that he was still holding out her coat and mechanically slipped her arms into it. He had counted on this, counted that it would be a momentary paralysis of will too, and he would have her gone now. Quite deliberately he put his hands on her shoulders and turned her towards him and kissed her.

She wrenched herself free before Lawrence could reach them and even Andrea fell back before the anger in her eyes.

"I can believe it—everything Lawrence has said—you have told me yourself now! Anthony trusted you and I trusted you and never knew that you had neither honour nor faith in you. I believed in you—and you kept me from my love!"

She gave a little gasp and caught at her own words as unfit for that room and went slowly towards the door. Half way there she paused again.

"What was the message exactly?" she demanded, looking at him with unflinching, hard eyes.

"Just that if you could bring yourself to put up with the life—he wanted you more than anything in the world."

He refused to lower his eyes, to modify the light indifference of his voice. He would lose no new aspect of her. As he had contrived a new one for his own ruin, he would at least reap the benefit, such as it was.

Bitter, aching pain drove the anger from her face and took mastery of her eyes. She barely saw Lawrence as she passed him.

"What will you do?" he whispered.

"Go to Anthony," she replied dully, and went out.

The two men listening heard the front door close behind her.

Andrea stooped and took up the paper, and he thrust it into the fire and trod it into the flames. He did not apparently notice that Lawrence was still there. Lawrence watched him for a moment and then he, too, went away.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MESSAGE ANSWERED.

LONG afterwards it came to Honor to wonder with ever increasing surprise, how it was that she should then remember so distinctly every little event that occurred between the time she left Abbey Road and her arrival at Villa Guardini. At the time she had acted in an obscurity and haze of unreality, incapable of taking in more than the immediate momentary action, yet afterwards all stood out with a bald distinctness that left no room for imagination.

She remembered going into a telegraph office, filling up a form, tearing it up and coming out again. She remembered her return to St. Jude's Road, and the sight of the telegram lying on the table in the hall and Alice's rather worried face as she watched her read it.

"Don't let papers alarm you, all well, will write shortly. Anthony."

She had laughed when she read it, and Alice had given her a still more uneasy glance, liking her laugh ill.

She remembered the consternation into which her bald account of Anthony's disaster had flung the family, and she recollected gratefully that it was Alice who had rescued her from clamorous questions, who had packed for her, brought her a continental Bradshaw, despatched Peter for a cab and finally escorted her to Victoria, had asked so little, and protested only once against Honor's refusal to wire.

In the train from Boulogne, Honor had at last

forced her unwilling mind to face the whole matter, and to analyse this reluctance of hers to announce her arrival and the motive that had prompted her to tear up the written message. It might be that some remains of her hurt pride still clung tenaciously around the citadel of her heart. True, Anthony *had* wired, but the message was such as might have alleviated the anxiety of a mere friend, it bore no relation at all to her aching confused need of more than bare reassurance of his physical safety.

If Lawrence's revelation and Andrea's confirmation of it were true, it bore also no relation to Anthony's need and desire for her presence.

Words! Words! They meant nothing! She must see him face to face. She would not warn him, she would surprise the truth out of his too careful mind. She was angry with him, angry, resentful, puzzled. She could find no reason for this foolish thing he had done, in trusting Andrea rather than herself. She jerked her mind back sharply from the consideration of Andrea's misdoings, for she too had trusted Andrea in her soul and it hurt her intolerably to remember she would do so no more.

He belonged now to a bygone experience in her life, that was done with forever, that she must never think about. She stood now on the threshold of something new and disturbing and she was terribly alone.

This perception of her loneliness kept interfering between her mental vision of the past and future. It seemed to hold her chained to the insecure uncertain present from which she struggled to escape in the thought that, moment by moment, it was melting into the equally unknown but less chaotic future.

It was clear to her now that she knew nothing whatever of the real Anthony, the fellow-being who in some way was bound to her; of the thoughts, the aims, the motives that controlled any one of Anthony's

actions with regard to herself: why, indeed, he had ever proposed to her, why married her, why he had let her go, and still more, why he had let her stay away if it were really herself and not the shadowy unimportant employment of hers that she called her work for which he cared, why indeed had he let her leave him?

At the least whispered hint she would have gone to him, of course, she would have gone even if she had not wanted to please him! She told herself emphatically she wanted that more than anything in the world! But even if it had been so, it still would have been her duty to go, not because he had made her Mrs. Bradon and his wife, but because he'd been so good to her! What had he demanded of her that she had not given? She felt herself subtly wronged. She tried to set the whole thing in her own realm of fictitious events, and find an answer in her inventive genius. But it appeared useless. Whichever way she turned it the actual living problem presented some feature that misfitted every theory she propounded. Of the two people concerned in the living history she was only accurately acquainted with one, and the unknown factor of Anthony's real character annulled her most ingenious efforts at construction. The circumstances of her life coupled with the beautiful fantastic fancies of her virginal soul had endowed Honor with an exalted idea of marriage, in which idea passion was but love's handmaid and love itself the deep abiding content of perfect companionship. Anthony had done nothing to shatter her ideals beyond his apparent failure to appreciate this latter clause of companionship. Whose fault was that?

She grew uneasy before this inquisition of close questioning.

Could it be anything to do with her? Surely not, when she had wished so greatly that Anthony might

want her and had longed for his presence and had desired above all things to please him.

It was a disturbing, miserable little voice that whispered she had wanted all this by fits and starts—when she remembered it.

Perhaps it was this same thing with him, and he had wanted her—when he had happened to think of it!

It was at this moment her trained instinct saw its chance and reminded her sharply she would herself never have made two people, supposed to be in love with each other, want one another merely when they happened to think of it. She assured herself with some vehemence that she was very fond of Anthony, but she did not make her own heroines marry because they were fond of a man.

At last she had arrived at something definite if disagreeable; a painful, dull, heavy fact that threw everything else out of perspective.

It could not be true, however. She would not admit it. It was treason to those dear sweet days at Wallingford.

But if it were not true, why should she feel so utterly alone now, and so uncertain about the future?

She cast round in her mind hurriedly and found a plentiful store of reasons for that. She was tired. She had had a shock. She was cruelly upset about Andrea. After all Anthony had behaved very foolishly. She retreated into the stronghold of her resentment against him. The proof of her love lay after all in the fact she was going to him *now*, in spite of that telegram so coldly empty of demand. She should tell him just what she thought—it would be better to be open about it—that he had been foolish.

At last she fell into uneasy sleep and later, being healthy and young, into sound slumber. It was not

tired; there were dark rings round her eyes and her dress showed traces of the night journey.

"You didn't send for me," she began. She had planned that, then the plan failed.

"Anthony, oh, my dear!"

She feared to touch him because of that bandaged arm in its black sling, but he made his left arm serve its purpose, and he kissed her on the forehead and installed her in a chair. Then he stood looking down at her and saying over and over again.

"It's nothing really, you know. It can all be put right."

He asked her abruptly if she had had lunch and was for ringing the bell.

Honor stopped him.

This was all as unlike her plan as could be and she too was struggling with some odd sense of misfit and unreality and made a colossal effort to escape it.

"Anthony, listen to me! I haven't come all this way out to you to have lunch. You've got to listen. What was the message you sent me by Andrea in the autumn?"

He stared stupidly at her and then at the fire. It was a big journey back to that.

"It does not matter, my dear, I quite understood."

"You did not understand and it matters horribly! I never had the message, Anthony. He did not give it me till yesterday."

"Not give it?" he repeated dully. He had travelled back now over a road so painful that he was dumbly reproachful.

"No, I thought—I have always thought—you did not want me—or that you wanted me most of all to write. Perhaps it was stupid of me, but that was what I believed, but now I am here with you, whether you want me or not. I *had* to come."

His eyes held her as if there was nothing else left in the world to see. She could not look away. Foregone conclusions, surmises, hitherto plain facts, and the simple foundations on which she had built up her existence were crumbling away. She clutched at some dim recollection of a plan which was not working out as it was meant to do. She had intended to be gently reasonable, to scold him just a little, to comfort him much, to get at an understanding. But she had not foreseen this tragically broken man, who had grown grey with a scorched face, and helpless arm. Here was no balanced kindness, no anger, right or wrong, possible, nothing but a surprising, mastering, throbbing need to love, to hold him in love, till that stricken look in his eyes died and he was healed.

Panic seized her, for he was trying to speak, to tell her something that did not matter at all, there was only one thing in the world she wanted him to say, or that she wanted to know herself. Her unerring instinct held off his personal tragedy at arm's length till her right to take it in fair share was assured. She sprang up and stood before him, tremulous and arresting in her eagerness.

"Anthony, Lawrence said you wanted me all the time—it's true, isn't it? Andrea wasn't right? Please tell me quick—I can't bear it, if he was, I want you so dreadfully. You *must* need me, oh, my dear, my dear!"

His arm was round her and her head on his shoulder. She could feel the beating of his heart and knew it would never be strange to her again. And he, conscious of unknown forces at work in her, stammered over words that should meet the vast demands of truth and still leave her confident of all she had grasped out of chaos.

"Honor, I don't understand myself yet what has

happened, but there's never been an hour when I've not wanted—not *you*, my heart, but your love. I thought—being a fool—I could do with less, just with yourself, with your sweet kindness, your generous heart, and I was all wrong, Honor. I wanted more, I didn't understand."

"Nor I," she whispered. "I just wanted to please you by being what I thought you wanted, as if that would make you love me—that's not honest dealing for anyone. And oh, my dear, what have they done to you?"

He hung his head and touched her fingers with quivering lips.

"It's all gone, Honor—my life's work—the thing I had to do. I don't think even the fragments in my mind can be pieced together again."

He smiled down at her, but the sight of his smile and the look in his eyes hurt her so, that she gave a little cry and put her hands over his face.

"Don't, don't smile over it yet, Anthony! I think I'd rather you cried."

She was weeping herself, frankly unashamed.

He shook his head, shifting his awkward one-armed hold of her.

"If I have lost all to get you, it's no weeping matter, Honor. I can forgive God."

"I could not—I could have no dealings with a God who made dreadful bargains like that. I'm not instead of your work. I am *for* part of it. If I thought that I wasn't I'd go away again. No, no, not really, my dear one—" for his hold tightened with foolish fear) "—but I'd know I had no right here."

So, with Honor's plan in ruins and with no more explanation or useless recrimination, these two left the past to explain itself, and from the fragmentary present began to construct a future out of unity of purpose and twofold personality.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

PRIMITIVE PASSION.

A SICKENING sense of defeat and loss held Andrea prisoner for some time after Honor's departure. He had no room in his mind yet to measure the extent of his score against Lawrence, he was only conscious at first that from that wonderful mental gallery of his, a picture had been torn down and stolen, and that Lawrence was the culprit. As to the exact value of the picture he could not at the present judge. He knew there was no replacing it. There was not a particle of sentiment about Andrea, he had no room in his gallery for mere memories. He required vital living pictures intimately connected with his "now." That particular picture would never be his again in precisely the same way as before, and his whole artist's soul cried out under the loss—even to the raising of an accusing voice that it was he and he himself, who had spoilt his best possession. He paid no heed to this voice, however, Lawrence was the only culprit without doubt, but just now he was strangely unwilling to enter into the subject of Lawrence's criminality. He took refuge from it in the thought that he had hurt Honor and was not suffering alone. It was not only a question of his dealing with Anthony, but he had betrayed her friendship and in that had power to hurt her, and he hugged the thought to himself with ungodly pleasure.

All this time he was painting blindly, mechanically, and foolishly, at the details of some draperies. He did not remember when he had taken up his brushes

any more than he could recall the steps that led him into rejoicing that he had power to make Honor suffer, but it had served to carry him away from that first maddening sense of defeat.

He gradually awoke to his surroundings, and for the moment he stared horror-stricken at the thing he had been doing and felt sick and shaken.

What had once been a restrained richness of solemn tapestries was now a crude riot of colour, purple, yellow, gold, flame and scarlet, barbarously violent, and fiercely antagonistic. It was as if some primitive child had been making free with the paint-box of the gods! Gazing at this in blank dismay, he remembered oddly how that newspaper had flamed up as he trod it under the burning logs—like some spirit set free out of the grey black and white of its flat existence. He knew now that in some remote corner of his mind these colours had burst forth into flame when he had turned and seen Lawrence watching him. He felt sick and giddy and an uneasy sensation of familiarity with this chaos of mind haunted him. It led to some issue which he was unwilling to follow up, and yet which would not be completely denied.

He pushed the easel, with its horrible, meaningless jangle of colour, face to the wall and thrust his tools out of sight.

There was something a great deal more important than all this to remember. Some point which had been in his mind when he first read of the disaster at Guardina as of vital importance to himself.

Angry impatience made havoc of his memory. He tossed details broadcast, and then found what he sought with a flash; the safety of his picture hanging there is the long salon, with destruction and fire for neighbours.

Real poignant, genuine anxiety wiped out for the

time those uncanny generic passions that had swayed him.

With the least possible delay he found a foreign form and wrote out a telegram.

"Is the picture safe? Andrea."

It must go at once, he could not endure the suspense longer than was necessary. He glanced at the clock and found he had missed much time and that it was not far off three o'clock.

He was on the point of calling to Lawrence to take the message when he stopped, a hot wave surged over him, leaving him again with that queer sensation of colour storm and sickness. He remembered precisely now when it had happened before. It was in his student days. There had been a man who had interfered with him and afterwards a scene—ugly and cruel—which he hated to recall. Of course it was the man's fault but he hated the recollection and it could have no bearing on present affairs.

He would, however, send the wire himself, it would be quicker so.

He paused a moment before opening the door and listened lest Lawrence should be coming downstairs, so little did he wish to encounter him yet. The silence of the house struck him quite forcibly and he thought with petulance that he would get younger servants with some sense of the joy of living, forgetting he had made Lawrence dismiss the last couple for a superabundance of that very quality.

It was at the telegraph office, after contact with other human beings that he added a decent enquiry as to Anthony's welfare. This done he went on to his club and had a belated lunch.

McPhearson, the actor, met him and asked him to come to a Jewish theatre in Whitechapel that night and see something no West End theatre could supply.

"It is Tolstoi and in Yiddish," he explained; "and

it's acted with more art than we can scrape together in a dozen theatres, and to an audience who appreciate it!

There was something bizarre and unusual in it which appealed to Andrea provided all proved well with his picture. He accepted the engagement therefore, with a little of the spirit in which one accepts an invitation when a near relative is lying seriously ill.

Though there could be no possible answer to his wire yet, he returned to Abbey Road at dusk.

He stood awhile looking somberly out of the window. The January afternoon was drawing to its close. There was a rising wind and low clouds trailed impatiently over the sky, as if flying from the approaching darkness. The bare trees in the garden and road bent, sighing to the wind, their branches grating uneasily on the wall. The empty, colourless road, the dumb, colourless walls, and the blank, silent houses, and the absolute absence of humanity, reflected themselves on Andrea's mounting mood. It was mingled with an odd sensation of fear. If there was not enough humanity outside, it seemed to him that there was a superabundance of it within. He had an absurd feeling of being shut up in this silent room with a stranger whom he did not wish to recognise. Wheeling round abruptly he faced the hearth and slowly went over the scene that had been enacted there that morning, in the hope of proving its insignificance. His efforts in this direction, however, stopped short at the moment of Lawrence's entrance. He caught himself watching the door furtively, fearing to see him come in again. For some reason he did not want to meet this stranger that shared the room—or his personality,—for the moment. Then, with another of those sharp almost agonising flashes of instinct he knew he hated Lawrence as he had hated that man in Paris fifteen years ago!

Yet it was not quite hatred. It was rather violent antipathy, a sort of grey impatience to blot out something which had crossed his will. He wanted Lawrence *not* to be there, as he had wanted that man not to be there—

Back away in forgotten generations of stronger nerved men that close companion whom Andrea regarded as a stranger, had swept such opposition from his path as a child knocks down a castle of bricks, now he only stirred in that long sleep which civilisation has laid on him for its own protection, but Andrea thought he lived and moved, and played with the thought as a morbid child with a bogey.

It was nearly dark now and the room was full of silence and shadows.

Andrea took to listening—listening—listening!

Through all the house there seemed no sound of a living being. It was as if the world had gone dead in an hour.

Then somewhere in the distance a door opened and shut. There were feet on the stairs, a light, even tread—Lawrence's step!

The sounds came towards the studio and Andrea stood up noiselessly, his eyes glued to the door. He had forgotten the stranger now—or absorbed him. He held his breath and felt the blood singing in his ears. It occurred to him in a flash that if he put out his hand and turned on the light, Lawrence would certainly come in.

The footsteps had paused.

He reached out his hand and was aware of the "stranger" again—and of Paris.

He stopped.

It was all a matter perhaps of ten seconds. The steps were audible again but retreating, they went on upstairs, the same light easy tread.

Andrea laughed and turned on the light.

About an hour afterwards the telegram arrived.

It was late when he and McPhearson got away from the Yiddish theatre. There was no cab to be had so they faced the unpleasant dusty wind and walked towards the Whitechapel Road, discussing what they had seen.

"We tried the play at 'The Athene,'" moaned the actor; "and it was a dead failure, but I knew it was good in itself."

"It's far too subtle for Mayfair," Andrea declared contemptuously; "they only care for their poor little sham tragedies, though for my part I can never see anything tragic in a man and a woman making fools of themselves. They imagine the universe is bound up in their affairs with each other. Beastly egotism, I call it!"

McPhearson, who knew Andrea pretty well, looked sideways at him and laughed.

"That's true anyhow, that which we have just seen, the tragedy of humanity defeated in its one-sided struggle. By Jove, how that man Mavolski can act. Look out!"

He clutched Andrea's arm as he spoke.

A man and a girl who had been walking in front of them apparently had broken into a quarrel. The man was more than half tipsy and he turned and struck the woman. She staggered back, lost her footing and fell in a crumpled heap on the pavement and the man kicked at her.

A policeman dragged him off, whistling shrilly, and McPhearson pulled Andrea hastily into a side street out of the tide of beings who instantly surged up round the girl.

"Ugly, wasn't it?" said Andrea unsteadily, and then McPhearson saw good to prop him against the wall, with severe remarks.

"Did he kill her?" Andrea enquired in a few min-

utes, pulling himself together with an effort, but still feeling very sick and faint.

His friend regarded her curiously.

"Don't be so beastly inquisitive," he said sternly. "Blood and thunder, and primitive passions are not matters for people like you to enquire into."

"I suppose not," agreed Andrea with surprising meekness.

The idea was new to him, however, and he thought over it in silence.

He also decided to accept McPhearson's offered suggestion to run over to Paris with him for a few days in search of a play for the autumn.

It was a question of starting the next day and with hardly any conscious effort, Andrea avoided meeting Lawrence before he left.

He dreamt of the girl with the smashed face, however, and could not prevent himself scanning the papers to see if the incident was mentioned, but it was not.

CHAPTER II.

SETTLEMENT DAY.

LAWRENCE was at least as relieved as his father by their postponed meeting. He lived in nervous dread of it for nearly twelve hours, and his hesitating movements in the direction of the studio on Thursday night were with the idea of "getting it over," but since there was clearly no light in the studio and no sound, he concluded wrongly that his father was still out.

He had left the house for Bertini's before Andrea appeared the next morning, and the short note awaiting him on his return and announcing the fact that Andrea had gone to Paris and wanted no letters forwarded, was too ordinary a matter to trouble him.

Left to himself he recovered his mental balance and even began to wonder if he had not over-rated his father's powers of mastery and resentment. There remained with him a sense of a new and unhappy element in his relationship to Andrea. Whatever there was of evil in his father's actions he too had a share in it. He sat in merciless judgment on himself as a coward and a traitor to both Anthony and Honor, and if he refrained from condemning Andrea with himself, he was still forced to accept the moral likeness between them with very bitter feeling. Like his father, too, he was very conscious of irreparable loss. Honor could not be replaced in his life, but unlike his father he held tenaciously to the idea of all she had and would still stand for in his career.

His new found balance was put to the test the following week, Andrea returned without warning in

a mood hovering between a wicked wittness and a superb indifference to the affairs or interests of others. Lawrence waited breakfast for him on the first morning, partly to get the first meeting over and partly because he had something to say to him. It required rather more effort on his part to say it than he had expected, but eventually he got it out.

"It's my concert this evening. I suppose you are not coming?"

For a moment Andrea hesitated, then said carelessly:

"I believe I took a seat some time ago. I'll come if you are not going to make a fool of yourself."

Lawrence made no such assurance. He was not at all anxious for his father's presence, but had considered it his duty to remind him of the event. Andrea divined this and with a magnificent stroke of unreason, added it to the score against him which he had by no means forgotten.

"Yes, I'll come. We'll dine here quietly first. That will probably suit you best, and I'm sick of restaurant dinners. Have you arranged for a supper after?"

Lawrence said "No," and Andrea declared he would ask all concerned to supper at the Savoy, and would telephone about it after breakfast.

Lawrence longed passionately to refuse and to hold to his original plan of a chop, tea, and a book at six, as the best steadiers for possible nerves; but there seemed no way out. He could not to-day oppose Andrea's will when it was apparently bent in his favour. It would have required a superlative courage and also it was running an imprudent risk, for he was certain Andrea would not easily give up his own proposals. So he set curb on his strong instinct to refuse, and accepted with mechanical thanks.

"Mr. Passfield was awfully disappointed not to see you yesterday," he remarked, as he rose from table.

Andrea searched in his memory for enlightenment and when it came he gave a little amused laugh.

"Alice's wedding! Good heavens! Did I accept?"

"Yes," said Lawrence briefly.

"I must send her a present. How did it go off?"

"All right. It was very quiet. They drove straight to the station from the church and the family had a tea and we all went to the theatre afterwards." How inadequately the bald words expressed the event which to Lawrence was mirrored in Alice Passfield's grave, wistful face. She had appeared younger to Lawrence, and in that temporary youth he had found a quality new to him. He had been at the house some time before they set out to church and Alice, in her white cloth dress, was going about making final arrangements for the little entertainment that she was not to share, in her usual efficient manner. They were alone together for a few moments, and she said to him.

"It's good to know what Honor called 'beautiful things' are true, even if they are for other people." Then abruptly: "I heard from Honor this morning. It is all right with them, you know."

That was all she said, but it was at that moment he was aware of the something new in her eyes, a sort of steadfast wistfulness that gave her a likeness to Honor.

He thought of it now as he went up to his room with an unopened letter from Honor in his hand. The letters had been brought in while they were at breakfast, and he hoped Andrea had not noticed this one. It had never entered his head that Honor would write to him; a sort of natural simplicity in him left him so consciously guilty of delay in forcing Andrea's hand, that he entirely overlooked the fact that to Honor he must still seem the "deus ex machina," who had sent her to Anthony.

It was not a long letter and it was more occupied over his own concert and Honor's and Anthony's re-

grets that they could not be there, than with their actual doings. Anthony had been ill but was better and she had persuaded him at last to come to England, to Gateways, and to abandon all attempts to decide about the future for the present.

"We shall arrive on the very day of the concert probably, or the day after. I do wish I could have arranged it a day sooner, that I might come, but it's impossible. We go straight to Gateways. Anthony is not equal to stopping in London."

At least then she would be in England and her good wishes were with him. He refolded the letter soberly. It would seem he had not lost her entirely. It was a good omen!

He began practice with an excellent heart. Bertini had limited him to his ordinary course of exercises to-day, and that over for the morning, he meditated a walk on The Heath, with Honor's letter now for company. In the afternoon, more exercises, a rest, and dinner with his father. He did not like that, not in the least, but it must be faced—or argued over. The latter was a worse alternative.

He kept himself well in hand through his practice hours and set out for his walk with a laudable intention of thinking of anything in the world but to-night's event, and what it meant for him in the future.

It was an unkind trick of his memory that brought back to him words he had overheard as he came out of the Steinway Hall one day.

"Isn't it tragic?" said a woman who was passing by; "to think of the number of stars that rise in here and set the next day?"

He could still hear the musical sadness of her voice, and her companion's more matter-of-fact: "Too many of them by half."

His fate, of course, was not going to be one of these stars of an hour, but he walked the faster, as he

thought of it, as if to escape it overtaking him. This was to be but a first step on the ladder he proposed to climb. It was not as a career that he thought of his future, but rather as a fulfilment of some inner promise that at all costs must be fulfilled.

He turned his thoughts with a jerk to the music he meant to play, going over it phrase by phrase, re-reading its meaning and possibilities. A joy, that was almost sensuous, of coming unity with it, seized him—joy and an irrepressible longing not to exploit his mastery of difficult technique, but to experience that drowning of his very soul in the language that it understood—happy indeed if he could convey a few syllables of it to the poor deaf world outside!

In this mood of exaltation he walked for some time, to fall presently from these heights to the material depths of hunger and cold misgiving that to return meant an extra tête à tête meal with his father. Andrea had not said he would be in or out. He was very seldom in, but Lawrence was possessed with the idea he would find him in if he returned. He lunched frugally and indifferently at a little shop in Hampstead High Street.

His aversion to returning held him longer over his meal than its amount warranted, and it was the knowledge that he had another hour and a half's practice to do that presently led him homewards.

If his mind had not now been engrossed with mastering his mounting fear of meeting his father again, it might have occurred to him to go straight to Bertini's to spend the remaining interval there, and ignore the arranged dinner at home.

But with a hazy idea that perhaps "nerves" lay at the bottom of this absurd dread, he tardily set out to get the better of it, for nerves are not weaknesses a young musician can safely give way to, on the eve of a concert. His mastery, however, only succeeded

in carrying him home. He went silently and swiftly upstairs with his heart in his mouth, recovering courage only in the safe seclusion of his room and in the mechanical tedium of exercises.

Thus passed the momentous day with Lawrence; that long looked for event of the evening held as far as possible at arm's length and that undefined fear of his father forcing itself silently and persistently upwards through whatever pressure he sought to lay upon it. It was like a spring of bitter water welling up through the sand. It continued to ascend and mingle its bitter water with the natural reservoir beside it.

But with Andrea the day was longer, presenting a steadily increasing enlargement of emotions rather than the exalting "ups" and depressing "downs" of Lawrence's experience.

In the first place Andrea had returned dissatisfied and disappointed with his visit to Paris. He had sought with energy and will to find a "picture" to hang in the place of Honor, and had sought it in the person of a *ci-devant* acquaintance, an amazingly beautiful woman, half American, half French, whom he had indeed known slightly for some time, or at all events he knew her husband.

In addition to her undoubted beauty, she had the reputation of being very religious and extremely charitable. How Andrea contrived to install himself in her good graces is not clear, but he did so, and found it opened for him the doors of the most exclusive and devote society in all Paris. Artistically, these people interested him; they offered new matter for sensations and understanding. Madame Z— led the life of a saint. Like her dress it was redundant with an austere simplicity that was not without charm. Here, if anywhere, he thought, he might find a worthy successor to hang in the place of the lost picture.

So for some days he sat metaphorically at her feet, and assumed an interest in the circulation of religious literature of the Middle Ages, and in the powers of Father Agustino's preaching.

He became curious to see how she contrived to reconcile her unworldly creed with the society life she undoubtedly led. Then, quite suddenly, she failed him as a problem. So that even her beauty ceased to suggest to him saints and angels of the Middle Ages, and became nothing more than monotonous good looks.

The slight spell that she had cast was indeed broken by herself. Andrea detected, with his unerring insight into the innermost heart of things, that there was a false note in all she did, that she aspired to sainthood by reason of her life of rules, and that those rules were cunningly fitted to run in harness with the social obligations that she saw no reason to lay aside. At the same time, she got quite as much pleasure out of her reputation as a devotee and much more artistic satisfaction than the most professed follower of more worldly joys.

In short—her austerity lacked the saving grace of being sincere!

The picture was therefore rejected as a fake or copy and Andrea turned rather in irritation to more familiar pictures and then suddenly came back to England. The moment he arrived in London he was acutely aware of the still unfilled space in his mind. His thoughts had reverted on the way from the station, with a last flicker of interest towards Madame Z—, and he thought it would be amusing to tell Honor about her—only there was no Honor.

At this point he had reached his own door. He paid the cabman petulantly and the man wondered what had happened to the affable gentleman who had engaged him at the station.

He was quite indifferent to meeting Lawrence now, though it might have gone hard with Lawrence if he had, on his part, evinced any nervousness over it. Yet behind all Andrea's apparent carelessness, his secret alert eyes followed every movement of the boy, and probed each twist of his mind ready to catch at the faintest shadow of a lost ascendancy, and to add it to the unforgotten score.

For Andrea never forgot, except in appearance, and some day that score would be settled. He made no plans and laid no traps for events but he waited, confident of "settling day."

At the most there may have been a faint idea at the back of his mind, as to leaving room for opportunities, when he decided to go to the concert and arranged the supper after. He did not define it so. He reasoned that he had no intention of living with Lawrence in a state of armed neutrality—on Lawrence's side. If he had lost ascendancy with him, he meant to regain it. That had been his foremost motive in his arrangement for the evening. Lawrence was to be lured back to allegiance at the tête à tête dinner and bound there later on, by those subtle cords of fascination which Andrea knew so well how to exercise.

That was the extent of his planning, if a merely half conscious train of thought can be called planning at all.

It was only when he was in the studio and his evil genius prompted him to pull out that defaced picture from the wall with its horrible chaotic mad splashes of colour, that he fully recalled the extent of his *débâcle* on the previous Thursday.

He sat for a while gazing intently at this first queer result of Lawrence's interference and to find some sense, some shade of meaning in it, for it was like touching an open wound for him to acknowledge his

fingers even, could work without reason or purpose.

Little by little he spelt out words and broken sentences in the incongruous chaos. And they were evil words and evil sentences. They expressed something within him that for five years at least he had been well content should have no ascendancy over him.

It was Lawrence who had set it free again, so let him look to the issue! A better impulse urged him to destroy the picture and look at it no more, but he resisted this skilfully as a futile weakness.

He looked round idly to see if he had any interesting work in hand and pulled out canvases and sketches with growing impatience. They were one and all expressive of a spirit he could not assimilate. The composition of them seemed now to be strangely lacking in subtlety. That extreme simplicity and unstudied effect appeared impossible to him. He could not remember how it was done. He did not want to remember or even to paint, but when he did paint again he knew it would be something quite different from anything here.

He wondered if he could paint that mediocrity of good that aped sainthood and made social capital out of it. It would make a good companion to that picture hanging in the little alcove. He wandered over and looked at that, criticised it, scoffed a little at the restraint of it, and suddenly was crushed under a horrible conviction he would never paint anything so good as that again. He might begin a new phase of work, and it would have its vogue because he was 'Andrea Bradon, but he, in his heart, would know it was a declining phase, that he had touched his zenith, that the abstract joy of truth, the clean simplicity of his vision, was not obtainable for him unaided.

It was not indeed a propitious morning for his future relationships with Lawrence.

The extremely comfortable dining room at Abbey Road looked its best in the evening, with its carefully modulated and shaded light that caressed the delicately broken outlines of the old silver and reflecting itself in the broken facets of the antique glass. There were a few flowers, offering just sufficient perfume in the warm air to remind one of spring. Later on when summer reigned and windows were open all the evening, stronger summer scents would be appropriate, but not now.

Andrea stood by the evenly burning fire and experienced a momentary relief from the tension of the day. On the whole he decided that Lawrence had not trained the last importation in the way of domestics at all badly. It would be a decided nuisance to have to run the house without Lawrence. On the whole he would not be so greatly annoyed if the concert to-night failed to justify Lawrence's ambitions of a distinct career. One never knew. Lawrence was highly strung and nervous!

The servant had put out champagne glasses and Andrea wondered why. Lawrence hardly ever touched wine, and he never took that particular wine if he could get anything else.

A recollection came to him of an almost forgotten treasure lying in some dark recess of a cupboard near at hand. He roused himself to look for it and brought to light a green wicker-covered bottle, sealed and labelled and coated with dust. At the thin neck of it one could see the ruby clearness of its life spirit.

With rather an odd smile Andrea gloated over the singular appropriateness of broaching this special bottle of a practically unknown vintage to-night. Fifteen (or was it sixteen years ago?) he and another had opened a similar bottle on a sunny afternoon in Sicily. Lawrence had not been there but they had drunk to his health in distant Germany.

It was really singularly appropriate, quite a nice little sacrifice at the shrine of almighty sentiment.

Lawrence entered just as he carefully deposited the bottle on a shelf near the fire.

Lawrence had always a slightly fragile appearance which was quite at variance with his real vital strength. To-night that fragility was particularly apparent. The delicate boyishness of his face seemed emphasised by the excessive nervous tension of his mind. He was very pale and his eyes were unusually alert and luminous, rather than bright. By this time he was in the most deplorable state of nerves and he came into the dining room with something of the sense of a trapped animal.

Andrea nodded to him pleasantly. He saw at a glance how little was needed to upset those finely strung nerves and it interested him curiously to speculate as to methods of calming or overthrowing the delicately balanced equilibrium of over-sensitive people.

Lawrence would have been safe to-night in Bertini's hands—Bertini with his infectious laugh and gay stories and masterful mastery of emotions. Anthony, likewise, would have been good company, just sufficiently sympathetic and sufficiently restrained to help him to decent control. Honor!—but Honor would have been best of all, with her brave confidence, her outspoken facing of bogeys, and her inspiring faith in him. Lawrence longed for Honor that evening as he had never longed for anyone in his life before. He had not expected to succumb to this stage fright. He attributed his state of mind entirely to that, though his eyes wandered restlessly from flowers to silver, from shadow to light, anywhere rather than in the direction of the head of the table.

Andrea asked him what he was going to play but in

an uninterested manner. Presently he looked at him critically.

"Why don't you let your hair grow again? It's part of the regular equipment, isn't it? The favour of the fair mounting in proportion to the inches they can cut off."

Lawrence's hand shook as he helped himself to salt and he spilt it.

"Throw it over your left shoulder," said Andrea anxiously. "Aren't you superstitious? I am!"

Then he abruptly altered his tone. He talked with deliberate intention of exploiting his own powers as a soother of jangled nerves. He did it so well that Lawrence believed he had really pulled himself together.

The dinner was short, but Lawrence hardly touched anything and Andrea, though he noticed the mistake, made no effort to remedy it. He took no wine himself and Lawrence drank water. When the servant disappeared and left them to their fruit, Andrea got up and fetched the wicker-covered bottle from the shelf.

"Your nerves are all going to pieces," he said kindly enough. "Most people are like that before their first show. I've known men taken that way before at a Picture Sunday, poor devils! You must buck up a bit though, or I shall want my money back."

He poured out a glassful of the liqueur. It was light ruby red, a colour with neither the purple tinge of claret nor the tawney tint of port; it was like nothing but a liquefied ruby.

"Drink that," he said, pushing the glass over to him. "It will make a new man of you and I'll tell you a story about it."

He helped himself and tasted it slowly.

It was an odd wine, warm to the taste, strangely insidious; it felt like hot sun creeping through the

veins. They had warned him it would strengthen with the years to a certain point and then fade to nothingness.

"You were an infant of about two when this was given me. Your mother and I were in Sicily—"

Lawrence gulped down the wine with a little gasp, he had been on the point of refusing it but the reference was too staggering to meet unsupported.

"Once upon a time," began Andrea, leaning back and fixing his eyes on the red wine; "there were two Sicilians, Candido and Ugo, who were wine-growers and friends till they fell in love with the same girl. She was a bit of a jade and cared for neither of them, but took good care to keep that knowledge to herself and get what fun she could out of life. Even after that, the men were friends by fits and starts. As soon as one felt assured of being the favoured lover he found compassion for the man he had ousted! Well, in that district they make a sort of liqueur—this stuff. There's something odd about the soil I fancy, anyhow you don't get it anywhere else. It's good isn't it?" He poured a little—a very little—more into his own glass and refilled Lawrence's.

"Certain wine-merchants of Palermo come out after the vintage and taste it and give a prize for the best. They all have their own family recipe and there's much rivalry. The judging is held as a sort of fête day and it was in Ugo's mind that he'd marry directly the fête was over. He broke the news with care to his friend who said nothing and went home to think it over."

The warm red life of the wine had by this time set the chill blood racing in Lawrence's veins. He felt decidedly better, even to taking a queer pleasure in looking at his father. It served as a test for his

returning self-control. He was quite unaware he had twice emptied his glass. Still, when Andrea again filled it up for him he made a faint protest, and did not mean to drink it.

He glanced, too, at the clock. Andrea noticed it. "Plenty of time yet. Are you feeling better? I thought that would prove good medicine; finish it."

He raised his own glass and seemed to drink. He found it singularly interesting to note how if he raised his glass to his lips Lawrence mechanically followed suit, the only difference was that Lawrence drank and he did not.

"To continue, Candido, the rejected man was not happy and he went out to air his sorrows in the moonlight—always a foolish thing to do. There he came across two lovers. There was no mistaking their relationship to each other, but though one was Miss Tessa, the other was not Ugo.

"Candido's code of honour allowed him to listen to their fond utterances, and he discovered the girl had been making fools of him and Ugo all along.

Candido was a young man with a devil of a temper, and no saving grace of humour, or at least it did not go so far as to fall in with Tessa's idea of the thing. An evening or so later, he inveigled her into visiting him, on pretence of seeing his new wine-press. It was not etiquette, so no one else knew of her visit. The press was in a yard and was a new patent thing. It may have wanted a lot of showing, or it may have been he did not well understand its working and made mistakes. Anyhow that's the last that was seen of Tessa. He murdered her there in the yard where the wine-press stood."

He stopped abruptly and glanced aslant at Lawrence, saw him turn pale and hastily gulp down the rest of the third glass of wine.

"There was a hue and cry after the girl, but no one connected her disappearance with Candido. The general idea was she had run away with some one else. Ugo, however, preserved a tragic air and went about in mourning, and persisted that something was wrong. Probably Candido longed to tell his friend he was a fool to trouble about the girl. Then came the day of judgment."

Again he filled the glasses unostentatiously.

"The vintage was judged bottle by bottle, glass by glass, till only Ugo's and Candido's remained to be tested. Ugo's came first.

"'This is something great,' said the judges and winked at each other.

"Ugo was in mourning as usual, with a face better suited to a funeral than a fête. Candido was in gala dress, confident, and pleased with life as usual.

"He opened his flask and poured out the measure. Ugo watched him, watched the strong fingers at work on the cork, watched the blood-red wine gurgle out like a life-stream. Then—'Judgment of God!' screamed Ugo, dashing down the bottle out of Candido's hand, "don't drink, that's no wine, it's blood!"

The low clear voice seemed to hold an echo of the scream, the whole primitive ghastly scene was summed up in it; the glass snapped in Lawrence's hand and the wine spilled over the table. He rose unsteadily with a little moan and sank back sick and giddy, with a singing in his ears.

Andrea leant forward and touched him on the arm, laughing a little.

"It's all right, Lawrence, what's the matter? See, you've cut your finger. Pull yourself together, boy!"

He leant still further forward and gazed into the wide open, frightened eyes.

"It was only a story, it was told us much better than that, by the man who gave me the wine which

came, by the by, from that vineyard; he'd bought it when the law finished with Candido."

It was doubtful if Lawrence heard him now. He was conscious of little save those compelling, mocking eyes, and a sense of swinging unsubstantiality in his surroundings. A fresh glass was put into his hand and he tried to drink, because those eyes told him to do so, but his sinking consciousness recoiled with shuddering repulsion from the red, shimmering stuff.

His head, too, dropped.

He made a great effort and clutched at the edge of the table.

"Take your eyes away," he struggled to say, "You've done something to me—I'm ill—giddy." His voice trailed off incoherently and he fell forward, his arms outstretched amongst the broken glass and spilt wine.

Andrea leant back in his chair and contemplated him with a singular look.

"I wonder if he'll get to the concert," he murmured thoughtfully.

Presently he got up and leant over Lawrence and shook him gently.

"Lawrence, it's time to go, wake up!"

Lawrence lifted his head.

"Time? I can't—see!" he muttered thickly.

Then he made a supreme effort and dragged himself upright.

"What have you done?" he gasped. "I can't even see—I must see—for pity's sake, help—"

But the words were thick and incoherent.

That was the last effort of will. He sank back again into his chair, but the look that he fixed on his father was one of terrible accusation.

Andrea smiled grimly. He had by no means ex-

pected such a complete collapse and felt a little contemptuous at the boy's lack of resisting power.

At that moment the front door bell rang and then there was a voice in the hall that Andrea knew to be Bertini's.

He went out quickly, shutting the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

BANKRUPT.

BERTINI's big figure loomed large and insistent in the hall.

"Ah, it's you!" said Andrea, in his most gentle voice. "Come in!"

He held back the curtain that separated the comfortable sitting room half of the hall from the entrance passage.

"Is Lawrence ready?" "We must not be late," Bertini enquired, following him. "This boy is going to do great things to-night, sir, we shall be proud of him."

He turned his kind, beaming eyes on Andrea, who looked back with an odd expression and shook his head slightly.

"Of course—I can't tell—Lawrence *may* pull himself together," he allowed doubtfully, "but it looks—"

The big man started.

"He has stage fright—eh? Oh, we must stop *that*, call him, sir. I'll—"

Something in the other's face arrested him to a startled apprehension:

"What is it? Trouble? He is not ill?"

"You must see for yourself, I suppose," the voice was reluctant "perhaps I am to blame, I was thinking of other things; I did not notice, I thought it—a mere light—wine."

He spoke with curious little jerky pauses between his words as he went towards the dining room again, with Bertini in his wake. He was aware it would have

been more convenient if Lawrence had not succumbed so completely. He hesitated with his hand on the door.

Bertini, on the rack now with anxiety, forgot conventions, pushed Andrea aside and opened the door himself.

Lawrence had not moved. The light fell on his fair head, and his arm shadowed his face. One white cuff was splashed and stained with the wine.

Andrea leant against the wall and watched with absorbed interest. He had not deliberately planned this. Down in the deep of his heart, perhaps he was glad he had not, but he was quite awake to the effect of the picture and to Bertini's terrible and almost paternal anguish.

"Lawrence, Lawrence, my child, wake you!" he cried, lapsing into imperfect English in his agitation. He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder and shook him gently first, then more violently.

Lawrence lifted his head. In a dazed far-off manner he recognised Bertini and struggling to his feet, clutched at his friend with terror-stricken eyes.

"Take me away," he muttered, and then saw Andrea over Bertini's shoulder. His reeling senses almost sobered themselves under the vast sense of wrong. He pushed Bertini aside, big man as he was and faced Andrea.

"It's you," he gasped unsteadily, flinging out his arm accusingly. "You've ruined me—you've—"

The momentary control melted from him. Bertini caught him in his arms and half carried half dragged him to the sofa, where he sank instantly into heavy sleep.

Bertini turned with blazing eyes and clenched fists on Andrea, who still stood quietly watching, leaning against the wall.

"What have you done here, what devil's work is this? I tell you I know Lawrence does not drink, it is some trick!"

Andrea held up his hand protestingly, his veiled eyes concealed their interest, he looked in the half-light a really shocked, horrified man.

"It is natural you should blame me, Signor Bertini. It must look like that to you—I should have been more careful, but as you say, Lawrence does not drink—as a rule. I thought nothing of—of leaving him—The thing is, what to do now?"

"There is nothing to do to-night!" cried Bertini, with tragic gesticulation; "but in the morning! If the papers happen to get hold of this! Oh, God! We shall do nothing with him in London now. It is over—done!" His hands dropped with a finality of doom.

"Why should it get there?" demanded Andrea swiftly. "It will not be from me."

"Nor me," said Bertina sternly. "Understand you, it is not the shame of it only, it's his professional honour—gone before it is well born. I hold you responsible!" he concluded fiercely.

"A doctor, drugs might pull him together," suggested Andrea, unmoved.

Bertini glared at him.

"Bah! you know nothing; nothing at all. It was not a bit of play, this, that he was going to do. It was a man's work. It wants a calm man, brain, fingers, strength, all perfect. Nothing less than that. A doctor—drugs! Bah!"

He bent over the boy again and a sudden fear struck him. He raised his head and looked Andrea straight in the face.

"I *will* send for a doctor," he remarked significantly.

"There is no need," said Andrea quietly. "I have not drugged him. It's just strong wine and a weak head."

His unmoved comprehension of Bertini's meaning staggered the latter. Also it carried conviction. Andrea never lacked the power to make a true statement carry the full force of its truth to his hearer.

Bertini knew that there was no trickery here, yet he stood gazing somberly at the table, and reading odd facts in its disorder. There was something unreal and sinister in it all. He felt stifled, and with a deep breath of disgust and helpless anger he strode to the door.

"I hold you responsible," he repeated hoarsely.

Andrea nodded.

"All right, I understand. I suppose it does not occur to you that he happens to be my son? No, I thought not—nor strike you that I may not quite like it myself?"

Bertini looked him up and down.

"Nothing about you strikes me—well."

With that he went out, and Andrea heard him slam the hall door to behind him.

Andrea sat down again by the table and gazed thoughtfully at the inanimate form on the sofa. Bertini's rather grotesque seriousness was, of course, mere pardonable exaggeration. A few score of people disappointed of some music. It was no great matter. And it was good to feel the score was wiped out.

It would be a profitable lesson to Lawrence in more ways than one. Andrea felt slightly aggrieved, however, that the settlement had been made with so little effort on his part.

"I don't like teetotallers," he mused; "but if Lawrence wants to be a musician he had better be the other thing, too. I shall point that out to him."

With such laudable intention he helped himself to half a glass of the red wine and held it to the light.

What an incomparable colour it had! A thing to dream about, to torment a man's mind, because it defied

the power of his brush. The colour was not a mere adjunct, it was the very body and form of the wine.

He rose and swept together the pieces of broken glass and tossed them into the fire which he replenished. Then he looked at Lawrence again. He looked absurdly young even with that flushed face and dulled skin.

"What a young fool he was to have interfered!

. . . He had only himself to thank!"

Andrea put out the lights and, going out, closed the door carefully. In the hall he encountered Larrio, the picturesque cosmopolitan who was the present domestic. Larrio had married an Irish cook at some period of a singular career, probably in the vain hope he would be able to live on her earnings. The vanity of this hope landed him here in Andrea's service.

"You need not go into the diningroom," said Andrea, slowly. "Mr. Lawrence is not well and is lying down. Leave it all as it is to-night. I'm going out. You need not wait up."

As Larrio also intended going out, this suited him admirably.

Bridget, his wife, was less satisfied.

"Shure, and what's the matter with the darlint?" she enquired, anxiously.

Like all females of her class, she adored Lawrence, though he did little but find fault with her thriftless ways. "Is it ill he is? And wasn't it this night he was having a bit of music all to himself?"

Larrio could or would tell her nothing, so when he had gone out, and presumably the master had also departed, Bridget crept upstairs to the diningroom. She turned up the light with a trembling hand and just at first thought the room was empty.

When she did see Lawrence, her first thought was murder! and she rushed to the window to cry it aloud

when the spilt wine on the tablecloth caught her eye! She stooped over Lawrence again.

A woman of her experience was not easily deceived nor very shocked, but she stood looking down at him, hugging her arms and rocking herself to and fro with a little wailing moan, while tears ran down her cheeks. The little fact that an hour or so later in the evening she was generally in the same condition herself, did not prevent her lamenting the "misfortune that had overtaken the 'poor darlint.'"

Then, taught perhaps by bitter experience, she went out and found a rug and tucked it round Lawrence. Not daring to ignore her master's commands as to leaving the table as it was, she retreated regretfully to her own quarters, and her sympathy for her young master took the acute form of imitation, so that when Larrio returned late that night he found her on the floor with her head pillowed on his slippers. He fetched no rug to cover her portly form, however, nor did he weep over her, familiarity having hardened him to the spectacle.

There was a faint, reluctant uplifting in the East, as if the dawn wondered whether so grey and uninteresting a world really merited awakening.

Lights still shone in the deserted streets and invested them with the unsubstantial effect of theatrical scenery. In the main thoroughfares the day's work was already in full swing, but here on higher ground the wheel of life had not commenced to spin.

Sparrows appeared the only things with any interest in life, except perhaps some shadows which slunk away after the tail of night shunning the blue-coated angels who had guarded the repose of the sleeping city.

Lawrence awoke to an unknown world. His first consciousness was of cold, then of vague discomfort, then strangeness. A strangeness that sent the chilled blood leaping to his heart. He shut his eyes fast again

and put out groping hands for some familiar sense of touch and found cold leather. *Leather!* He had to open his aching eyes.

The light of a street lamp outside streamed in under the blind and through a gap in the drawn curtains. It quenched the faint glimmer of reluctant dawn, made the white tablecloth luminous and reflected itself in little flecks of light on the scattered glass.

Lawrence sat upright shivering, not only with cold, but like a frightened child awakening from a nightmare. Drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, his eyes strained to see some more familiar scene through this confusion of wrong things. He realised with strange misgivings that he was in his evening clothes. Could it be he was merely resting?—had fallen into deep sleep?

He looked uneasily at the fireplace. The fire was dead and dark, there were only ashes—*ashes!*

After that he took into vision the glimmer of the white cloth and the scattered plates and glasses.

Suddenly the little streak of bright light was extinguished. Outside the dawn had made up its mind to wake in earnest. But not in this curtained, disordered room. The mere glimmer of light that filtered in was ghostly, and Lawrence, springing up in wild terror, tore back the curtains and jerked up the blind. There was the wall outside, the bare trees, the sooty pretence of grass, but all unfamiliar and grey and flat in this half daylight, which was worse than darkness. He tried to cry out, and his voice broke harsh and cracked in his parched throat. This dim, grey, dead world heightened the terror at his heart. He must have light. He turned, stumbled against the table, and groped his way to the door. His shaking hands fumbled in helpless panic for the switch, found it by chance, and he drew a long breath of relief at the flood of light.

Plenty of light now! Light on the uncleared table, light on the big ugly stain on it, light on himself, on his crumpled clothes, his haggard face and heavy eyes that confronted him in the glass. Light on what had actually occurred also.

He collapsed on to the sofa again and hid his face, shaking from head to foot.

"No, no, no, no, no!" he whispered and repeated it a hundred times, as if by sheer repetition he could deny truth to the past.

He remembered sharply now that Bertini had been there, he remembered his voice. Had he been to the concert after all?

The ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece grew insistent. "No, no, no, no!" it repeated.

He struggled to wake up out of the nightmare, and to push aside the weight of fog on his brain.

There was pain, too, now. He ached all over and his throat was as dry as if a fire had scorched it. The need of water goaded him to action. He got up and found a jug of water on the table and drank deeply; the cold chill of it revived him so that at last he could think consecutively.

There had been no concert, he was sure. Memory tugged at no loose strings in that direction. He remembered his father's voice, and a story—his unwilling eyes took in and quickly avoided the stain on the cloth.

He remembered the taste of the red wine now.

He had been drunk—nothing but that! On the night of his own concert—just drunk. Again he hid his face and fought against the acceptance of it.

"No, no, no, no!" and again "No."

The image of his father got between him and his thoughts, an image with compelling, smiling, mocking eyes.

And *he* was somewhere here in this house, under the

same roof with him still, and by and by he would have to see him.

He might even come in here!

He struggled up again with rapid set purpose, and put out the light. The dawn was growing to maturity now. He opened the door and listened intently. The house was dumb, and yet full of the strange noises of the dumb. He went out into the hall and upstairs cautiously. His head reeled and every now and again he had to stop and hold on to the rail.

At last he reached his own room. He fell face downward on his bed and lay there prone, beaten down with the first overwhelming sense of shame and horror.

Again he roused himself, fighting like a half stifled man to escape out of this sickening slough of shame and to get—clean!

Presently he would have to see people. Larrio would come!

He would see no one here. His mind refused that definitely. He must go and get into the open air, out of this place.

With a haste that was also mechanical, he commenced to change his clothes. A cold douche of water cleared his mind, and the effort of drying himself brought some vitality to his stiff body.

He mechanically emptied the pockets of one suit into that he put on. There was not much: some keys, a letter, a handkerchief, and some loose money. He did not even count it. He caught sight of some little things he had put ready the night before, when he left the room to go to dinner—a ticket, gloves, a handkerchief, and a clean tie for that supper which had loomed in the distance. For a moment he had to lean again the table before he could conquer the weakness that surged over him. No doubt it was this that made him forget an overcoat, for he remembered a hat and stick.

He went downstairs. It was apparent to him that he must go very quietly or he would not escape this evil house. He let himself out of the front door and since it would not shut without a bang, he merely pulled it together.

The dawn was at full work now, sweeping away the cobwebs of the night.

Nearly two hours later he had wandered on to Waterloo Bridge. He could not have told how nor why he came there. If he thought at all it was of walking through an eternity of time, possessed with a strong misgiving that there was no place to walk to, and no aim in walking, forward or backward. Where should he go indeed? There was no one he wanted to see, or who wanted him; no outside to his life at all, only these maddening shameful memories to which he was bound.

By this time he was not by any means responsible for his thoughts or actions. He leant over the bridge and looked at the muddy, rushing, out-going water. Even that did not call to him; it seemed to his sick fancy no spot on earth had room for him, he had just to go on.

A policeman crossed the road and sauntered up to the parapet and leant over beside him. Lawrence looked up at the big solid form and found a curious brown eye fixed on him.

The haggard boyish face appealed to the well hardened police soul, and perhaps the brown eyes reflected some sympathy and inspired confidence, perhaps despair clutched at the first living being who had looked at him definitely.

"What do people do," he asked anxiously, "when they don't belong anywhere any more—when they get drunk, you know?"

"Mostly they go home to bed—to their friends," said Robert kindly. "Shall I call you a cab, sir?"

Lawrence shook his head.

"I've been to bed, but there's no place to go to now."

"Sometimes they go back to their friends in the country," hazarded the policeman.

This was by no means a town type of young man. It looked quite possible that he might carry a return ticket to somewhere about him.

Lawrence's eyes dropped to the river and a sailing gull. Then a barge crept out of the shadows of the bridge. A boy sat by the heavy tiller, eating his breakfast. Lawrence looked down at him curiously.

"I think I must be hungry," he said shyly. "Are there any shops open?"

Robert smiled. This was better. Food was safer to contemplate than muddy water.

"Come along with me," he said, with a touch of protective patronage. "I'll show you a place over there," he nodded southward. Lawrence turned and walked beside him silently.

"About that ticket," began Robert tentatively. "Where did you say the place was?"

Lawrence shook his head.

"I haven't a place in the world."

"Lost memory," muttered Robert. Then aloud: "Why not look in your pocket, perhaps there's a letter as would help."

Lawrence again shook his head but he obeyed.

He brought out a bunch of keys, a pencil, ten shillings in gold, one and sixpence in silver, and Honor's letter. Daylight seemed to break over him. Illumination flashed into dark places, and a great burden fell from him.

He looked up at Robert and laughed.

"Of course," he cried, and the change of voice was

startling; "there's Honor! I must go to her, she'll understand—it's all right! Thank you so much."

He was for pushing a shilling into the policeman's hand, but Robert thrust it back.

"Perhaps you'll want it yet, sir, if it's a long journey. And there's breakfast. Here's the shop."

He piloted him into a humble eating-place and signed to the rather frowsy-looking woman who presided. Apparently she knew Robert, and was not surprised at his companion. Lawrence found food set before him in a marvellously short space of time. It was not very appetising, perhaps, and his appetite—such as it was—had disappeared, but the tea was hot and he drank plenty of it.

All the while the thought of Honor was tripping up other ideas in his mind, sucking in all other desires and fears, becoming an overwhelming mastering need before which the very foundations of a physical world must fall, if they opposed him. That vague helpless look that had roused Robert's attention faded. He did not speak much but he made pretence at eating, and paid for his meal with a collected air. Then he rose.

"Goodbye," he said, holding out his hand to Robert. "I'm most awfully obliged to you."

"You are sure you know where to go now sir?"

"Oh yes, to Honor; she will understand."

Robert could do no more. He was still a little uneasy and would have been more so had he known how little his charge knew himself of this friend's whereabouts.

He watched him disappear amongst the labyrinth of tram lines that led towards Waterloo, and then, having made some entry in his note book, he went back to his beat.

Lawrence went on to Waterloo because it was a station, and he vaguely connected it with Victoria.

He was conscious, however, that something was

wrong when he asked for a ticket to Brescia. The ticket clerk looked out at him sharply.

"Where's that?" he demanded, and Lawrence in confusion moved off and sat down on a bench to think.

He had to get to Honor. It was difficult to find room in his mind for any other thought. Honor was in Italy, so it would take a long time. He took out her letter again and new recollections dawned on him.

Not Italy! She was coming to England, to Gateways. Perhaps she was even there now. How lucky he had remembered. He might have gone to Italy and found her—not there. Horrible thought!

He remembered also one went to Sanage from Waterloo, and that was the station for Stansted.

He betrayed some caution and went to a different place for his ticket.

"How much is a ticket for Sanage?" he demanded.

The man looked at him. It was the same clerk after all. Lawrence blushed.

"Sanage? Eleven and four," he said shortly.

Lawrence considered carefully.

"How near can I get for this?"

He put down the ten shillings.

"Wartham, ten and a penny."

Lawrence nodded, and found a sixpence.

The clerk hesitated, but there were other people waiting. He planked down the ticket and the change, and Lawrence gathered them up.

"Number Five platform, ten-fifteen," said the man curtly.

When the stream of people ceased for a moment, he remarked to his neighbor:

"Something queer about one of that lot. No business of mine though, he had the money."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOURNEY.

THE train glided away out of Warnham Junction in the direction of Sanage, leaving one forlorn-looking passenger at the dreary station.

"Luggage, sir?" demanded a porter, casting a doubtful eye up the empty length of the platform.

Lawrence shook his head. He was still looking after the train which would get to the vicinity of Honor so much sooner than he would. But sevenpence halfpenny of capital must not be recklessly squandered.

"Ticket, please."

The collector, tired of guarding an unbesieged gate, sauntered towards him. Lawrence produced his ticket and also a question.

"How far is it to Stansted?" he enquired.

The collector and the porter exchanged glances.

"Nigh on twenty miles across the downs and the moor," offered the porter doubtfully.

The other added additional information.

"That train went to Sanage, it's only a matter of five or six miles from there to Stansted."

"Yes, I know." Lawrence's eyes were dreamy and absent. He said "Good-morning" politely and went out of the station.

"Queer customer!" said the porter, taking up a luggage trolley to replace it.

"Cracked!" decided the ticket collector impatiently. "No business of ours, though. His ticket was all right."

He examined it again to make sure.

Outside the station there was a sign-post and it pointed straight to Sanage. Lawrence set out along the road without hesitation.

It was a cold day, with a slight fog well salted from the sea, and a sense of muffled, baffled life in the air. For spring had already made frantic endeavours to express herself in this southern county, and had been worsted by lack of sun.

The road lay for some time along the margin of the Great Inlet, making occasionally big detours to avoid it, but ever returning to some sight of the lake-like shores. Sometimes it ran over sandy moorland, through patches of heather and young pines, then abruptly branched off into meadow country, trailed through grey little hamlets with stone-roofed houses, or skirted downland that ran to the lip of the heatherly moor, then back it would go to the Great Inlet again.

Lawrence walked on steadily, neither heeding nor caring for the country. He was interested in nothing but the fact he was going to Honor, and that she in some magical way was going to make straight again the broken path of his fortune. Only under the safeguard of her sane tender presence could he venture to turn and look the past steadily in the face. Just now he felt there was some danger lurking there, that he must not risk encountering alone.

His head felt curiously light and empty, otherwise he was not aware of his physical needs, until passing through a little village he saw some biscuits displayed in a window and it occurred to him he was hungry. He had no idea how long it would take him to walk twenty miles, but he thought he would probably need food, and biscuits seemed easy to carry. His available cash was sevenpence halfpenny, and after investing fourpence of this in biscuits, he spent another penny on a glass of milk. Also he asked his way again, and learnt that he had come five miles out of it, if he were mak-

ing for Stansted and not Sanage. The woman who had served him directed him by a short cut out to the Stansted road, which eventually led up over the downs. She watched him curiously as he thanked her and turned to take it.

He was perfectly collected in manner and there was nothing in his appearance to warrant undue interest, except for a sort of childish wistful appeal in his eyes. Yet every man, woman, and child to whom he spoke that day answered him with puzzled kindness, and looked after him with curiosity and anxiety.

The short cut was no doubt short for any one acquainted with it, but it proved of little service to Lawrence, finally landing him in a marshy, weedy field separated from the surrounding common by wide ditches, whose boggy margins forbade jumping. He finally got out of this by trespassing through a cottage garden and so into a green, grassy lane.

He began to feel tired. The rounded ridges of downs which he must eventually climb marked the general direction for him, but they seemed an immense distance off, and seeing within an open gate, a partly cut rick which offered a sheltered seat, he turned aside to rest awhile.

It was very silent out here in the country. It was as if cessation of movement had just awakened him to the cessation of noise of city and train. There was an occasional twitter of birds, the distant bark of a dog, and now and again in some unseen corner the crank of a bucket travelling up and down a well. He could see the road where he ought now to be, two fields away. It was a little used route, the main road running direct to Sanage was some miles distant and neither motor nor carts seemed plentiful here. Lawrence began to eat his biscuits, and eating taught him that he was indeed hungry, so he finished them and could have done with more. It was rather pleasant

there leaning against the rick. He looked anxiously towards those distant shoulders of earth that he must presently climb. From the top of the furthest shoulder he would look right down on Gateways. The thought should have pushed him onward, but instead it lent a false sense of security under which he fell asleep.

When he woke the afternoon was sinking into dusk. It was not really dark but there was a twinkling light in a cottage which made it appear later than it actually was. He sprang up affrighted. He must push on at all costs for he had no money for a lodging; he had given one of his remaining pennies to a child at the gate of the garden through which he had trespassed. Besides he must get to Honor to-night.

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Ben Tilehead had foddered up his cattle and locked the stable door. He made no unseemly hurry over his last job, the locking of the hen roost. Maybe it would strike six before he'd finished and he need not look for further employment.

The yard gate should be shut too. He leant over it for a moment when he had closed it. There were footsteps on the road and he might as well see who passed.

The wayfarer was a young man. Ben could see that, also he was a "furrener," and he walked slowly and haltingly as if tired. He did not pass, but seeing some one there, came up to the yard entrance and put his hand out to touch the gate. Even in the fading light Ben could see his face was white and looked a little frightened.

"Is it far to Stansted?" he asked, in an uncertain voice.

Ben shifted his position slowly, looked downward, looked skyward and delivered himself.

"Nigh on eight mile, maister, over the hill thur, 'ec beaint a gwaine to Stansted thee night?"

"I must!" exclaimed Lawrence, rather wildly. "I've no money, I can't stop anywhere!"

"Maybe a cart 'ull pass that 'ull give 'ee a lift!"

"I've no money," repeated Lawrence despairingly. He edged a little nearer the old man.

"Be 'ee come fur?" asked Ben, scraping a mud laden boot against the gate.

"From Warnham."

"Matter o' twelve mile."

Twelve miles! And he had been five hours over it. But there had been the five mile *détour* and the fatal short cut, and the sleep under the rick, which by the way had not in the least quenched his desire for rest.

He had no experience of remote country like this, of the long stretches of empty road, widely scattered cottages, and solitude. The thought of those empty downs already melting into the darkling sky frightened him, yet beyond them only lay safety. He must—he *must* get to Honor that night.

"Do 'ee know these yer parts, Maister?"

Lawrence confessed his ignorance.

Ben shook a wise head ominously.

"Thee wun't get to Stansted on foot this night, surely! It be a-gwaine to rain."

Rain! That was the finishing touch. Lawrence put his arms on the low wall and leant his head on them.

"Zum un 'atter' 'ee?" suggested, rather than stated Ben sympathetically. "Maybe thee 'u sleep as easy in hay as in Stansted. Thee coom inside."

He opened the gate.

Somewhere in the distance a clock struck six. Lawrence started and hesitated.

"Coom in, will 'ee?" Ben insisted hoarsely.

"Maister aint got the' open hand, sure, but thee'll do naught of harm to his hay. I'll let 'ee out be-times in the marning."

Lawrence only understood about half of this, but

he grasped that shelter and sleep were offered him, and with the offer, the impossibility of reaching Stansted that night became glaring. He followed the old labourer across the yard, stumbling over the rough stones and unexpected holes which his guide avoided with the dexterity of familiarity. He lost sight of the old man in the gloom and found him again at the door of a small hay shed.

"I'd as soon sleep on hay as straw," chuckled Ben "Thee wun't hurt 'en, take off thy boots. I'll wake 'ee in the morning, afore the old maister's up. Thee ain't no call to do naught but sleep."

Sleep! The thought of it was a stronger jailer than lock and key. Lawrence sank down on the sweet hay and sighed with relief.

Ben eyed him queerly.

"I'd a boy as was 'wanted' once," he said. "They caught 'en—dang 'em!"

It was quite dark in the shed. Lawrence could see the outline of the old, bent spare form against the fading light outside, and wished he could stay, but Ben straightened his back to go, and then was seized with a new idea.

"When did 'ee have a snack last?" he demanded with solemn kindness.

Lawrence thought he had some biscuits about dinner time.

"Biscuits! Wimmen's stuff!" retorted Ben, contemptuously.

Then he shamled off, leaving the door open.

Lawrence thought he had gone for good, and fear dulled by fatigue, counselled closing the door, but before he could summon resolution for this, the old man reappeared, carrying a guttering candle lantern in one hand and a big cup, with a great wedge of bread and cheese balanced on it in the other.

"Told Sabina as how I'd spilt the calf's milk," he

chuckled, in his heavy way, "and she gi'd I more, and this bit o' victuals. Sabina ain't a bad 'un, not as gurls go nowadays. Different to my missus, though." He set the cup and its substantial cover before Lawrence. The candle lit up the dusty cobwebby corners of the shed, and the weary face of the wayfarer. Ben, with natural courtesy, sat down while Lawrence ate, that he might not feel hurried.

The light flickered on the brown, lined old face, with its fringe of grey hair. He chewed a bit of hay thoughtfully.

A glimmering recollection of another meal came into Lawrence's mind.

A picture of a warm dining room, shaded lights, choice food, red wine, and a companion with compelling eyes—a mere hazy picture of something which had occurred long ago. Again it was a dusty hay shed, the only light from an ill-shielded candle, the only companion an old farm labourer.

"Why do you help me?" asked Lawrence suddenly.

Ben contemplated the drops of rain which were falling to prove his long established right to the title of "prophet."

"I telled 'ee afore as how I had a boy myself, what they was 'atter', about your age maybe. A likely, good-looking boy he were." He dropped off into silence pregnant with untold events. Presently he repeated a former remark with heavy vehemence.

"They got 'en. Dang um!"

Lawrence had emptied the cup. His companion rose stiffly.

"I'd best shut the door," he said. "And don't 'ee go off till I do coom, that's all I ax of 'ee. Thee'll feel fine rested by marning!"

Lawrence was shut in with the darkness, therefore, and lay listening to the heavy, slow footsteps dying away in the distance with a quickly beating heart. It

was not quite silent, however. There was the rustle of the hay if he moved. Close by a cow was munch, munch, munching her supper, and a little further off a horse stamped now and again and pulled at his halter—a rat scuttled across the floor.

Lawrence soon ceased to hear these things, however. He sank into the half waking, half sleeping condition which extreme physical and mental exhaustion together will bring, when even discomfort or fear fails to rouse weary humanity to movement. That he fell at last to true sleep was due to those long hours in the open salted air.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the morning when Lawrence stood at last on the high down above Stansted and looked down over the edge of the intervening pine woods at the chimneys of Gateways. Away to his left stretched the desolate moor, right to the shore of the Great Inlet. Below him on the right was Sanage and the tumbled waters of the little bay, breaking through the rents of a sea-mist, which tried vainly to climb the high ridge that lay between it and Stansted. It was on this ridge he was walking and it led straight out into the sea, ending in ramparts of white cliffs.

There lay Gateways, the blue smoke ascending peacefully from its quaint chimneys and its grey roof, over-topping the village below, stood out against the sky-line.

There was sunshine too over the country which would presently eat out the heart of the curling mist, and leave a clean swept sea.

Lawrence left the downs and came out on the road which led to the village. He was near his goal now but he walked with no haste. He was making incoherent, futile efforts to arrange words and finding it a cruel task. If only she knew *now* and he had only to find her and put his head on her knees and—let go!

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That shadowy something which had pursued him all the previous day, and the fear of complete recollecting too soon and too vividly, before he had adequate protection near him, clashed with the necessity of formulating some statement by which he could account for his presence.

Past the pine wood and along the familiar green lanes to the little gate at the back. The sun shone very brightly now. In the early borders crocuses and scillas, and even early daffodils announced their content to dress the sombre earth with joy. Some pigeons strutted on the lawn; down at the lower end of the garden a man was whistling over his work.

Lawrence felt his heart beating again in strange jerks, as he opened the gate and went slowly up the narrow path that led to the front of the house. The door stood wide open and the sun shone in on the warm carpeted hall, and in at the long windows of the dining room. He walked slowly, because he was watching for Honor to appear.

She came out, blue clad and cheerful, into the sunny porch. He heard her voice before she appeared, talking to Anthony who followed her. He hurried then, reaching her before she had actually taken in the fact of his strange arrival.

"Lawrence, Lawrence!" she cried, and caught his hands in hers.

But Lawrence stumbled forward, fell on his knees before her and hid his face in her dress, and forgot those laborious explanations.

Honor asked no question. She just sat down on the porch seat and put her arms round him, smoothed his disordered hair, touched his cold hands tenderly, and felt him shaking.

She looked up at Anthony who was gazing at them in bewilderment.

"He's fearfully cold, get him something hot—hot milk or tea."

And when they were alone, she bent her head down to him.

"Lawrence, my dear, I don't know what's happened, but you are quite safe here. It's right now."

"Yes," he gasped, looking up at last. "That's why I am here, it's safe—Honor—everything has gone—I've lost my chance. There was no concert—I couldn't play—I—I was—drunk—I think the wine was too red."

The whole recollection he had held off so long came over him at last in completeness, and he "let go" indeed, and slipped from her arms, out of reach of his fear and shame.

It was not until the evening when he lay in a still, quiet room with Honor sitting beside him, that they heard what had actually occurred, or what he thought had occurred.

They had to disentangle what facts they could out of his confused account. It appeared clear that he had dined alone with his father, and had been overcome with wine or drugs, and unable to go to his own concert; that he had awaked next morning on the scene of his failure, and realising it, had quitted the house and left London, and reached here partly by rail and partly on foot, and that his one dominant idea had been to get to Honor. Mixed with this were impressions of Waterloo Bridge and a policeman, and some trouble about a ticket, and a vague indication of a man at a farm. Plainly he had slept amongst hay, for it still stuck to his clothes, and the scent of it clung to him.

It was to Honor he spoke, and she prompted him with questions now and then and gave little smothered exclamations of distress and anger, and held in with

difficulty her desire to give voice to fierce outspoken words.

But Anthony sat in the window-seat within earshot, and heard also. He gave no sign at all but just sat with bent head, and when at last, Honor leant over the bed and said gently: "It's all right, Lawrence darling, we understand; don't worry any more!" Anthony got up and came across to them.

He, too, tried to say something soothing and kind, and failed, and went quietly out of the room.

When Honor presently came downstairs, she found him in the studio, gazing at a picture of Andrea's, and when he turned to her, she realised that she had not known that Anthony could look so hard and angry.

"Oh, Anthony, isn't it cruel?" she began with a little catch in her voice. But he stopped her with a gesture.

"Don't say anything yet, please, Honor. I'm going out—I waited to tell you—I—I must get level with this alone. I just stayed to tell you not to wait dinner for me."

She drew back from him with an odd sense of dismay. She could understand a really furious outbreak, or even Andrea's sarcastic anger, but this shut up, chained wrath, that tugged at its bonds frightened her in Anthony, and he saw it and took her hands and looked down into her face.

"Dear, I can't talk yet, and I can't help you till I've helped myself; but, thank God, he came to you!"

Then he betook himself and the storm in his heart to the open air.

Of all the evil deeds to be set against Andrea's account, this was the hardest to meet with anything short of repudiation of the doer. He could find no words for such a crime against paternity or humanity.

He walked on and on over the moor, trying to get beyond the sense of blind, helpless wrath, that blotted

out the instincts and faith of his calmer reason, which had always swayed him, in regard to this inhuman gifted cousin of his.

Yet, if there were anything in such instincts, they must prove good now, and prove that there were nothing in his righteous anger that could in any single degree lift the shadow the other had flung so callously over his son's life.

Perhaps if he could have stood face to face with Andrea at that precise hour and spoken, it would have had its place in things—this anger. But that was not possible, more, he recognized danger there—for both of them.

Anger betgets anger, wrath begets wrath! All wasted force, wasted energy, leading to destruction, breakage, disseverment—constructive of nothing!

There are acids which poured on certain solids disintegrate them utterly. The solid may require dissolving, the acid is not necessarily an evil thing, because it is destructive, but the action will be the same whether the solid be worthless or valuable. That was how anger, such as possessed him, appeared to Anthony. It was not a question of the merits or demerits of it in the abstract sense, it was a question of its inevitable action.

If ever anger were justifiable it was so here. He would have been less than human had it not possessed him for the moment. It was shattering, devastating passion, but it had to be endured. Andrea had produced it as surely as he had produced the joy and beauty of his pictures. The question was—was he, Anthony, to be anger-ridden, mastered by it, forced into action that contradicted the tenor of his whole life? Had he fought a hundred battles with impulse,

to be worsted now in the Armageddon of his reasoned mind.

Instinct forced him to revolt against cruelty and callous egotism, and impulse pushed him towards violent antagonism of the man who sheltered these base passions, and Reason, who had so long ago drilled into him the wasteful uselessness of all actions based on anger, found poor hearing through the tumult in his mind.

Was it his place to add to the disintegrating forces in the world? It might be some people's place to do so, he knew; but not his surely, who had all his life stood on the other side.

So he argued and struggled with himself. So Reason gradually became audible and action and wrath were once more divorced and he was again master of his own soul.

It was quite late when he got back. Honor was waiting for him anxiously. She also had sought counsel of the night and was walking up and down in the garden, but she had set, and could set, no bounds to her anger, and he knew her to be shaken and broken with it, even in the dark, directly she ran, as she did instantly, to his arms.

He held her a little while, and told her he was sorry to have left her, but that he had been of no use to any one, when he went out—and she must forgive him.

They stayed out in the soothing darkness a little while and when they were going towards the house again he said:

"I must telegraph to-morrow early. It's too late to-night."

Honor started and withdrew her hand from his.

"Telegraph to whom?" she demanded, in a hard little voice.

"To Andrea."

"Why?"

"Well, Lawrence seems to have just disappeared without telling any one. Andrea will be hunting for him." His voice too was a shade hard and dry.

Honor stopped still in the path and faced him. She was standing in the streak of light before the hall door and he could see her face and recognised there all the hot wrath with which he himself had battled.

"Let him hunt," said Honor. "Let him be anxious! But do you suppose for a moment that he'll care?"

"Andrea has rather a vivid imagination," suggested Anthony quietly. "I am pretty sure he will care a great deal."

"I hope so! Oh, I do hope so! I should like him to spend nights and days with only his imagination to comfort him—to fear and seek and seek—" She gave a little choking gasp. He saw her face was white and that her hands were tightly clenched, and knew it was better to let her speak; he might help her now as he could not have done two hours ago!

"It was his own son—his own son, Anthony, think of it! Think of what he has done, and what he's robbed him of—his senses, his honour, his chance! And all the while he pretended to be friends! Oh, it hurts—it hurts horribly—to remember even, that I—that *he*, was my—friend! I was beginning to forgive him but I can't now. I want to make quite sure he will never come near either of us again—either Lawrence or me, no, not a shadow of him. If we could only forget him!

She covered her face with her hands and broke into dry, hard, heartbreaking sobs.

Anthony ached with her grief. He recognised very clearly how much was involved in this unheaval of her old faith and how her future growth was at stake. He knew too, that bound up with her passionate, gen-

crous anger on Lawrence's account there was still an exceeding bitterness on her own, so that she found no comfort even in her righteous indignation.

The most cruel wrong that Andrea had dealt her, was in making that note of bitterness possible. Never before had her anger, however roused, been tinged with this, but it was there now, in the cruel, little, biting scorn of her own trustfulness and open, healthy faith, that the venom lurked, carrying with it a deadly sense of contagion and latent possibilities, so that in every condemnation of Andrea she felt herself involved.

Incapable as she was of realising any grosser form of attraction, she hated herself for the ease with which she had responded to the fascination he exercised so readily. It appeared to her like a prostitution of her mind before the clear, bright edge of his keen wits. It was inevitable she should exaggerate matters, for she was thoroughly alarmed at the pain the severance of their friendship could cause her.

It was not that she had had an exalted idea of Andrea Bradon's character or morals. He fell short indeed of her real requirements in almost every particular, but she had never failed to attribute such shortage to outside conditions, mere questions of standpoint and degree, and it had not occurred to her that these might be fundamental differences. Now she saw that difference as a chasm over which she could not, and did not wish to cast a bridge. She rather wanted to assure herself of a complete cleavage in nature and to repudiate that curious kinship of soul which he had so outraged.

Anthony divined something of all this, but he could bring no note of all those logical arguments that had stilled his own soul, to bear on her. He recognised it was by different means. Honor must get in touch with peace again. He could only so surround her with love and tenderness that bitterness would presently per-

ish in her soul and she would wake one day to find forgiveness there, even for so great a sinner as Andrea Bradon.

It was, however, no question of forgiveness that made him send off the telegram the next morning, without further word to Honor. It was that it seemed to him inadmissible for a sane man to allow callous indifference to others, and calculated cruelty, to raise a fresh crop of troubles for the world's reaping.

CHAPTER V.

A VIVID IMAGINATION.

SLEEP, like rain, falls alike on the just and unjust, or forsakes the pillows of saint or sinner without discrimination. Andrea at all events did not find her absent and awoke next morning not only duly refreshed but with a placid sense of satisfaction and the cessation of that irritating recollection of discordant colours, which had troubled him so of late. There was nothing in the dining room when he descended to remind him uncomfortably of last night's events. Lawrence was not there, and apparently had not breakfasted before him, but that was neither surprising nor alarming. Larrio certainly had the appearance of a man desirous of unburdening his mind, but it was Lawrence's place to deal with domestic troubles, thank Heaven, and Andrea gave no opening for a usurpation of those rights.

At mid-day there came a telephone message from Bartini, curt and to the point. "How is Lawrence?"

Andrea, who had resented being interrupted at all (but Bertini had refused to communicate with Larrio) merely said he had not seen Lawrence that morning, but would send to tell him to answer for himself. The line was cut off abruptly and Andrea returned to his work faintly amused.

Ten minutes after this Larrio's hesitating knock again disturbed him. The substance of his communication was that "Mr. Lawrence was not in his room, he thought he had gone out early. The front door was open when he came down and he had taken his hat and stick."

"Well, it's not customary to go out without them," Andrea said carelessly.

Larrio hung on his steps a moment, but finally went away.

The morning's work was on the whole satisfactory. Since he was working in charcoal, colour did not trouble him.

He devoted the afternoon to working off the arrears of such correspondence as he must attend to himself and at four o'clock Larrio brought in tea.

"Shall I make it, sir?" he asked.

Lawrence usually made it himself.

Andrea looked up and frowned a little.

"Mr. Lawrence is not in yet?"

"No, sir." There was something reluctant in the tone.

Andrea told him shortly to make tea.

Lawrence was no doubt with the Passfields or Bertini. No, Bertini had telephoned, he remembered that. He recollected also, with faint impatience, that Alice Passfield was married, and that Lawrence was not particularly devoted to the rest of the family. Still, for the moment, he could not recall where else he might be under the circumstances.

At half past four o'clock he began to feel annoyed. Lawrence had no business to disappear like this, even if he felt a bit ashamed and down in the mouth.

At five o'clock he made some excuse to himself to mount up to Lawrence's rooms. Very likely he was there after all—or he might have left a note. Larrio was such a fool!

There was, however, no note and no Lawrence, but he had taken nothing in the way of luggage, not even an overcoat.

Andrea went down again.

After all it was no business of his what Lawrence chose to do. He had never laid any restriction on him,

and if he felt injured and chose to keep out of the way—why, let him! Andrea stifled a momentary wish that he *had* taken more luggage than a stick!

He recollected that he had had no exercise, and he might as well go out and see if Lawrence had turned up at Bertini's—no, he would telephone there before he went out. Bertini bored him.

It was a thin Italian voice that answered him, Bertini's wife. Mr. Bradon had *not* been there that afternoon—then there was a sort of jerk and Bertini's big, sonorous tone took up the enquiry.

"The boy is not here. Why should you think so? Not seen him to-day? Went out this morning—thunder and damnation!"

The voice broke off in the middle of an emphatic curse, and Andrea could get no further answer. A vague uneasiness seized him. Bertini's tone had been so pregnant with poignant alarm, that some infection of the same must have travelled on the wire to the listener. It was mere folly, of course, what was there to be alarmed about? He would go out.

There were a good many roads down from the Heath. It was not at all unlikely that Lawrence had gone for one of his long walks in that direction and forgotten meals and time. It had happened before. Andrea stood a moment looking up one thoroughfare, doubting the wisdom of taking it on the chance of meeting the truant. Finally, he went townwards.

He decided to go to his club. Lawrence would be back to dinner, no doubt, and anyhow he could telephone from there. At Baker Street he ran against Mr. Passfield, who clearly, from his behaviour, had no knowledge of the feud between Honor and himself. His face was full of concern.

"We've been hoping to hear from you all day," he

said reproachfully. "How is Lawrence? Is it anything serious? It was a most terrible disappointment. Bertini managed very well, so that every one was more concerned than annoyed; of course, there's the press. It's hard to convince *them*. Bertini was dreadfully upset himself, and would answer no questions."

Andrea realised with a little effort that he was hearing about the concert.

"It's so inexplicable," went on Mr. Passfield dolefully. "Lawrence is so seldom laid up. Is it Flu?"

Andrea was on the point of saying Lawrence was well enough to be out all day when he stopped himself. It was not worth while running counter to Bertini. He allowed that most possibly it was "flu" but he'd let them know. Then he escaped. "Not much damage done after all," he thought scornfully. "He can have another show later on."

At seven o'clock he telephoned from his club to Larrio, and learnt that Bertini had called, made certain definite enquiries and departed, without hint of his intentions, but evidently much upset. Andrea had no particular wish to meet Bertini, but he could have desired something more definite from him than his "thunder and damnation!" What, after all, did he imagine could have happened? Lawrence was not such a fledgling as to be morally unbalanced by the thought he had taken a little too much of a strong, unknown liqueur.

He left his dinner unfinished and went out into the streets.

It was at this point that vital sixth sense of his—his imagination—began to take part in the uneasiness his common sense would rebuff.

The streets at first seemed to him full of promise. At any moment he might jostle against the lost boy.

He could see it happen with his mind's eye. Only, unfortunately, it did not occur.

A sharp, sudden vision of a little restaurant in Soho, where he and Lawrence had sometimes dined, became very insistent. He could see Lawrence seated at the table in the far corner. He could see the conflicting glare and shade of the rather badly arranged lights, and Lawrence's face looking rather white and strained, as he had often painted it.

He was in Northumberland Avenue when this picture arrived and matured itself and he called a taxi and directed it to the place.

The taxi chose to go along the Embankment before turning up across the Strand. It was a damp, slippery night and they went slowly. Andrea thought, with impatience, the pictorial effect of the Embankment at night was over-rated, that it was cheap and not worth paint and canvas. Then just before Waterloo Bridge he suddenly stopped the taxi, dashed out and hurried to the parapet. There was a man leaning over it looking into the dark water that sucked so monotonously at the smooth stones. He was young and fair-haired. The light just over him had revealed that much to Andrea's quick eye. He jumped at Andrea's sudden approach and looked at him with startled eyes, but they were not Lawrence's eyes. . . .

Andrea turned back and dismissed the taxi.

He forgot all about the little restaurant in Soho.

His fervid imagination could see nothing but Lawrence's slight form hastening with rapid, uneven steps along the wide pavement in front of him, leaning over the parapet now and again, gazing into the muddy river.

He made a faint effort to resist the picture, tried instead to pour contempt on the state of mind that found the muddy river preferable to life in its most uninspiring form. His egotism, at least, would never

find life so bankrupt of interest, so long as—well, so long as he could paint! He had no conception of life separated from that function.

But if Andrea were an egotist he was also an artist. That meant he was possessed of a gift of sympathetic vision in a major degree, and he was acutely aware that if Lawrence were deprived of certain things he considered of first value, he would find nothing worth retaining in bare existence coupled to personality.

Andrea walked faster now but he could not outpace his own vision. It grew in distinctness. He no longer saw Lawrence walking before him, casting furtive glances at the river, he saw him on the big bridge that spanned the brown flood and was reflected in it with its coronet of lights. This picture was very insistent.

By the time he had reached the bridge, common sense had gone to the wall and imagination had it all its own way—no servant, but a veritable master, wreaking its will upon him.

He remembered there were river police and river stations.

He made a last faint little mock at himself as he went down some steps that led to such people and such places.

It was an odd story he told. A missing boy who might have walked into the river, depressed, possibly—possibly even wandering in his wits.

The police listened respectfully and did not commit themselves. His evident distress and anxiety were met with considerate kindness. They would do their best.

At the back of his mind Andrea was wanly amused to think they attributed his torment of anxiety to affection, but there seemed no purpose in explaining he was only "picture ridden" by a sick imagination.

It was nearly midnight when the man to whose

charge his anxieties had been committed, saw good to take him to another station just below London Bridge. All night till then, there had been enquiries, telephone messages, the sharp ring of bells and short, crisp questions and answers. Between whiles he had walked up and down the dreary Embankment, loathing with almost physical sickness, the brown, dark river, and yet utterly unable to get away from it. The morbid horror of his imagination mounted hour by hour. Pictures painted themselves in his mind, were obliterated and re-painted, minute by minute, till the smallest detail of each was complete and clear and the main subject ever the same—a white face, brown water, fair hair matted with mud. It was horrible beyond words to find something within himself painting this thing again and again. Choosing the colour, blocking in the masses of shade, knowing it to be revoltingly clever, if a man searched the whole world through he would find no better model for the theme than Lawrence Bradon—there was some ghastly fitness about it that he could not struggle against. It was so fit, it must make itself true!

He had no room for remorse, hardly for pity, he was consumed with the terror of his own imagination. If this continuous picture materialised itself into fact, he knew he would have to live with the unmaterialised image ever before him, or actually paint it to exorcise it. It was the crowning horror of all to know how easily his deft fingers would do their work.

The inspector in charge watched him with sympathy. They were all sympathetic. At the station he was taken to, he was left alone a few minutes, and was seized with an almost overpowering temptation to escape. Circumstances and not his will mastered it presently. He heard himself answering questions, considerately put, but of miserable import, and his own lucidity surprised him. He played with a pencil and

paper which lay on the table before him as he answered and the inspector watching his quite unconscious movement, leant forward and took the paper.

"Is this the young gentleman?" he asked quietly.

Andrea bit his lips; he had not intended to do that with the pencil. It helped towards materialisation. He signified however, it was like—what he sought.

The two men exchanged a glance, then one of them said:

"If you will come this way, sir."

He was sick and faint and a kindly man handed him a glass of water, and the others looked doubtfully at each other.

Andrea got up. His own impression was he would have followed his guide to hell to satisfy, once and for all, this creative curiosity, which consumed his very soul.

It was not so far as that, though. He returned in three minutes, his curiosity satisfied, details added to the picture in his mind, but he had not found Lawrence.

Back to Abbey Road again, away from the unwholesome spell of that brown water. But imagination was not to be stinted in her work for that. She caught at the wide, empty space of Heath, dark sky, and cold stars, and the dim white face and fair straight hair were unnaturally clear against it.

There was no news at Abbey Road, except a message from Bertini, saying he had put the matter of Lawrence's disappearance into the hands of the police. Andrea read it impassively.

Bridget had spent the evening in hysterics, and Larrio was morosely silent, but had waited up. Andrea shivered with cold as he turned up the light in the studio. The fire had burned down and Larrio had forgotten to put out whisky, or any other refresh-

ment. He called him impatiently, watched him rebuild the fire and supply his needs, and then dismissed him curtly.

Once in familiar surroundings Andrea made some fight against his insidious enemy. But he could not reasonably account for his panic and that added to it. Had his whole soul been wrapped up in his son's welfare, he could not have endured greater agony of mind—and he was not even fond of Lawrence—!

Or was he? He sat down with his head on his hands trying to puzzle it out. Just what did that fair, fine face stand for in his—Andrea Bradon's—existence?

It was not a question of affection, he argued, it was a matter of an ugly incident that bestrode his nerves as a nightmare, and offered his sense of proportion and fitness.

Besides, he hated anything that upset the familiar order of things. He wanted Lawrence here in the house. He wanted the pleasure of contemplating his over-refined, sensitive face, just as he had wanted Honor's vital joyousness and beauty—and lost it!

He would go to bed and sleep and escape. There would be news of some sort in the morning. He took every precaution to invite sleep even to the taking of a little white tablet. Sleep, however, was oblivious to his need until the morning, when she paid him a cursory visit, weighed down with genuine nightmare of a white face floating in the swirling eddies of murky water.

The sick horror of it was with him when he awoke. It clung to his side all that ghastly day. There were hours when he had to fight with himself to keep his aching fingers from brush and palette and the material picturing of his tortured mind. He would not leave the house that day. The streets appeared to him more

ghost-ridden than familiar places. No one came near him. He tried to communicate with Bertini on the telephone, but Bertini would have none of it. He gathered, however, that Scotland Yard was engaged, and was inclined to look northward—Heathward that meant—rather than riverward. There was a trace of a fair-haired wanderer over by Hornsey.

The authorities had not yet alighted on Robert's report of the odd loiterer on Waterloo Bridge, though it had, of course, been properly given in.

It was late in the evening when Andrea brought himself to the point of going out and going to Bertini.

Bertini was in the mood to shut the door in his face, but a bitter sort of curiosity prevailed. Andrea was shown up to him.

"I am waiting to hear now. They will wire," Bertini told him, drily referring to the chance out at Hornsey.

He was constrained to ask him to sit down, even his fierce anger was a little appeased by the aged, pinched look in his visitor's face.

It was half an hour before the wire came, and they spent it in complete silence, Andrea sitting gazing moodily into the fire, and Bertini gazing oddly at him.

The wire, when it came, reported the hope was a futile one. The wanderer at Hornsey was already claimed.

Andrea got up.

"He'll probably turn up to-morrow and wonder what we fussed about," said Andrea to Bertini as they parted. His voice was composed and Bertini for the moment was going to refuse the hand held out to him quite naturally; then he saw Andrea's eyes and took it.

Again he passed the evening walking rapidly through streets known and unknown. He had no definite aim to-night though he paid no visit to Heath

nor river, nor police. He just walked because that way, now and again he got ahead of that wicked master of his mind and the picture grew misty.

Sheer physical fatigue brought him back at last. The queer torturing hope of news that seized him as the house came in sight died out as he let himself in. Larrio had gone to bed to-night. There was food left out for him. He would have none of it though, neither would he face another night in bed.

He flung himself on the sofa dressed as he was, and this time he was not content with one of those little white tablets.

He woke in the morning to find Larrio standing by him with a telegram in his hand. Andrea caught it from him and tore it open.

"Lawrence here with us, ill, but in no danger. Anthony."

Larrio made pretence to open the curtains, and glanced disapprovingly at the room, which bore that strange air of dissipation and disorder which the most sober of rooms attains in the first entrance of daylight before drowsy-eyed service puts hand to it.

He glanced also sharply in a mirror and saw his master sitting up, gripping the telegram in his hands, and staring straight before him.

Andrea saw him and told him abruptly to go, adding as Larrio obeyed:

"Mr. Lawrence has gone to Stansted, to Mr. Bradon's."

Left to himself again, he smoothed out the wire and reread it.

He was alarmed at the bewildering sense of relief he knew to be his. It was out of all proportion he thought.

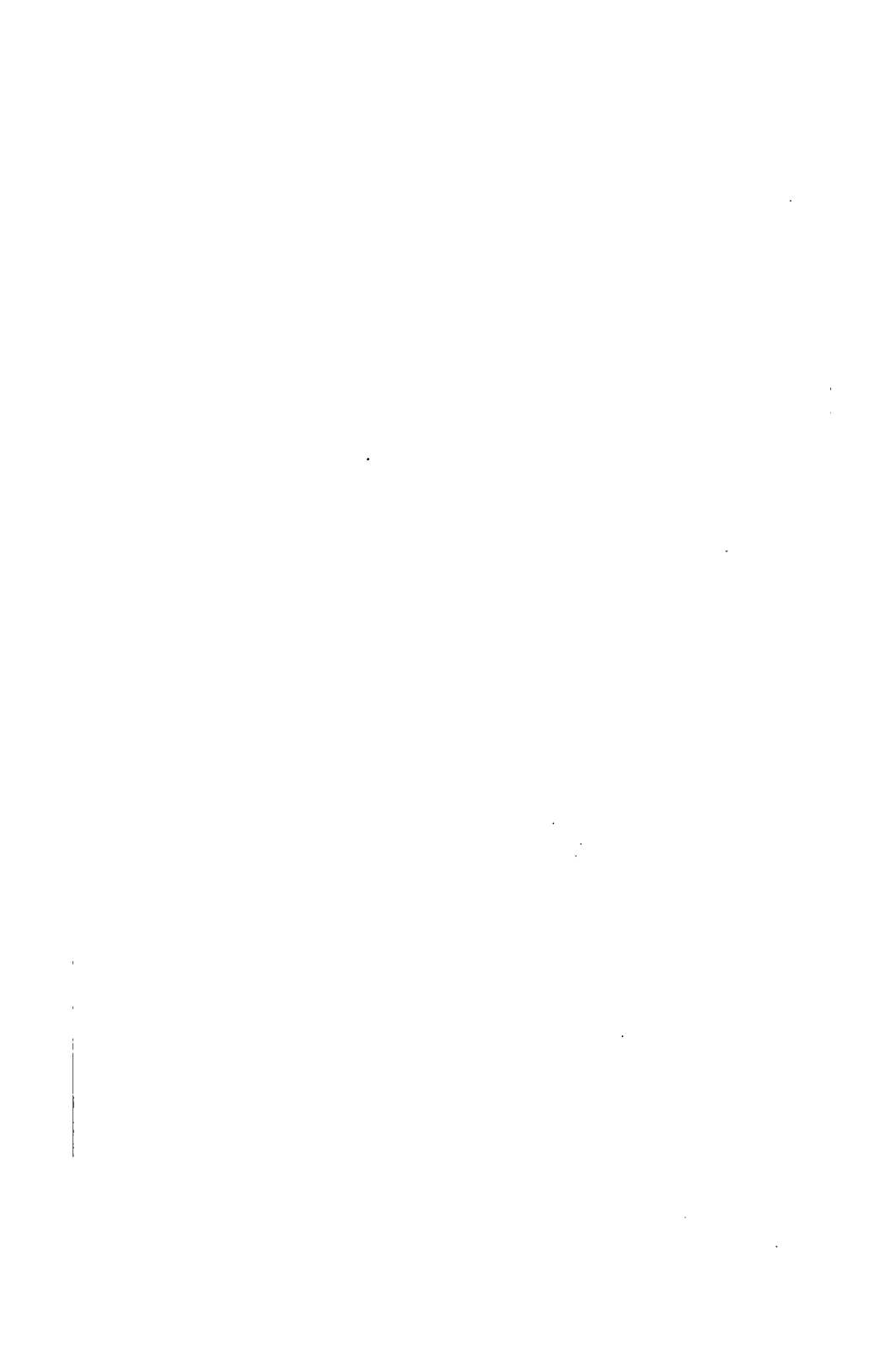
He got up presently and going to the window opened

it and shivered in the morning air; outside the sparrows were busily hunting for breakfast and quarrelling with each other. There were some biscuits on a table by him and he broke some up and tossed them to the sooty little birds.

He decided he would go and have a bath and change.

Half way across the room he stopped and caught the back of a chair.

"My God!" muttered Andrea Bradon with very sincere feeling, "I'm glad I have not to paint that picture. I should have had to do it or go mad!"



PART V.



Freebed

11

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CHAPTER I.

ASHES.

HONOR was right with regard to Lawrence's store of physical strength. A few days' rest was sufficient to restore the balance of his body but, unfortunately, his body was inexorably linked with his mind, and however strongly that might resist the inward pressure of a sick soul it was limited in outward action by the directions of that soul.

Which is merely a long way round of saying that Lawrence was well enough in body, but still sick in mind.

He appeared to recover quickly in the few days he lay in bed, in the quiet, sunny room. Security and peace are good nurses, so he was soon allowed to come down and took his place in the daily routine. They spoke freely before him, treating him as part of their circle of life, telling him of their own affairs, and of all that had happened in Italy, of their present indecision and desire for time. He watched Honor's continued close care for her husband, watched their new perfect understanding of each other and he saw with an aching sorrow the little shadow of age which had crept over Anthony and the faint shade of lost confidence which breathed from Honor's open soul. It seemed to him that their lives had been broken and smirched by the same hand and that some indelible stain of it remained, even when the shadow had passed away.

Honor was excellent at keeping them all amused, or at least interested in outside things. In the house,

she avoided using the studio where was the piano, and many of Andrea's pictures; she insisted on Lawrence learning to manage a boat, and in Anthony's exploring the fishing possibilities of the shallow bay, and she was always ready for walks over the moor in search of new flora or fauna. She managed indeed her two "wounded" combatants so well, that Anthony thought of her own wound as healing. It was the result of very close attention on his part that he discovered towards the end of April a little pucker of anxiety about her eyes, which sat there when she felt herself "off duty."

One day she despatched the two on a walk by themselves, saying vaguely she was busy, and Anthony had detected that little pucker very plainly visible. She had, however, he considered, her right to the mental reserve she so generously left to others, so he asked no questions but followed her will.

They climbed to the top of Sunset Hill, where nearly a year ago Honor and Andrea had sat and he had wrought his magic on her mind. Of that they were happily unconscious.

It was a warm, sunny day. The brown heather was all ready to burst into green life and the boggy morasses between the hills were starred with flowers. In the pine woods behind them the trees were resinous with flowing sap, and vibrating with the gentle music of doves. The two had come quietly, for the day was languid, and Lawrence was the first to show signs of fatigue.

"Let's stop here," said Anthony. "Our commands were to go out for a walk; the duration of it was left to our own fancy."

"It's a walk and a climb too, up here," returned Lawrence, subsiding on the heather bank. "I'm tired," he added, tossing off his cap and leaning his chin on

his hands. Anthony sat down on the bank and looked at him curiously.

"It's not bad, is it, letting someone else take command, when one's been worsted—as you and I have?"

"You?" Lawrence looked up sharply, and then dropped his chin on his hands again.

"Worsted just for the moment. This is a breathing space, but I think time's nearly up, Lawrence. Don't you?"

"Up? For what?" he muttered, pulling at a piece of stubborn heather.

"For the next round; we are not beaten, you know."

There was a long silence. The languor of the spring laid a forbidding hand on Lawrence's brain. He glanced half reluctantly, at his companion. Anthony was unmoved. He took out a pipe and filled it awkwardly, for he had not yet free use of his arm. He was sorry for Lawrence but he was thinking more of Honor. It was his way, as it was hers, to go to the root of a matter if he set out for it, never to hang round on the outskirts of it.

"Honor's marking time for us, but I am not sure some one ought not to be doing that for her. Have you any idea what's wrong, Lawrence, besides ourselves—and your father?"

He spoke very quietly and naturally and he saw Lawrence jump as if a gun had gone off. Most decidedly he thought they had marked time long enough!

"Do you know of anything else to worry her?"

Lawrence said with an effort he did not and wasn't it time to go home.

"No, it's time to talk, my boy," retorted Anthony, kindly and firmly. "She mustn't have all the responsibility, it's not fair."

Lawrence hung his head.

"I'm complaining of myself as much as of you," went on the elder man severely. "I've let her plan

and help me and make things easy and have just—let go—for nearly two months, and you've done the same. It's all to her credit that we could not do less but it's got to end sometime. I've got to decide what I'll do, so have you. Let's take your idea first. How do you feel about it all now, Lawrence?"

His quiet matter of fact tone forced a road to the hearer's reluctant mind, so that he was almost glad to speak, if by so doing he could rid his thoughts of his daily burden.

"I haven't even answered Bertini's letter," he began. "I can't see any way out. What's the use of my trying again to begin a career? A musician has got to be a man of steel nerve and what have I proved myself? A weak, hysterical boy!"

The passionless, dead bitterness of his voice was pitiable. Anthony longed to point out to him the falseness of his deductions, but refrained; he must arrive at that himself to do any good.

"I take it that any art's a royal mistress," went on Lawrence with the same slow bitterness. "Well, when she summoned me, I failed her, that's all. Probably lots do, though not quite so ignobly as I did. 'So many stars, so soon to set,'" he murmured half under his breath and stared at the ground between his hands. His long lashes veiled the trouble in his eyes but Anthony felt it was there.

"The most exacting mistress would give a second chance," he suggested.

Lawrence shook his head.

"I hear no music now," he answered with a dreadful simple finality.

There was another long silence between them. Anthony looked out at the swelling harmonies of the wide open country, he could distinguish the earth's voices all round them, the tender whisper of the distant pines, the rustling heather, the far-off eternal

crooning song of the sea. Even his untutored ear could recognise the music of the Universe, but he—the born musician at his side—could hear nothing and knew as much. Anthony felt he had not sufficiently grasped Lawrence's tragedy.

Pity nearly slipped her hand from common sense, but not quite.

"What's in the way of you hearing, Lawrence?"

He recoiled from the look in the boy's eyes now.

Courage born of despair and self-contempt broke the last barrier of his reserve, his clenched hands grew white and he flung up his head with an odd gesture of abandonment.

"Fear! That's what's in the way—I am an utter coward. The thought of seeing him sickens me; when you mentioned him just now, I could have screamed aloud. Do you know why I changed my place at dinner the first night? It was so I might not sit facing that picture of his. Now you know all there is to know. My art is not served by cowards and I don't know why you should befriend me!"

The fierce, hot words broke as from a bubbling well of conviction, he ended with a deep indrawn breath and dropped his head again.

"Yes," said Anthony, very gently. "I have been thinking that was perhaps how it all seemed to you. I've felt nearly the same myself. It was time I feared—not a person. Fear's demoralising—well, that covers the past and present, but the future is our own; what shall we do with it, Lawrence? Will you go abroad and travel, or study, or will you come to Wallingford and help me get straight with my failure first?"

"To Wallingford?"

"Yes, I only heard this morning that I can have it, if I will, this year. I have not even mentioned it to Honor. I wanted to think it over first—if I could get

a commission started who would go on—take up—my work—.” He stopped.

Lawrence felt his heart stand still. Hitherto, he had not tried to come to any realisation of Anthony’s catastrophe; even Honor’s broken account had failed to make it as real to him, as did Anthony’s quiet voice, halting oddly over the few words.

“If she had been there at Guardini it would never have happened,” he muttered half under his breath. “I could have helped that and I didn’t.”

Anthony leant forward and put his hand on the boy’s shoulder.

“Don’t take that little extra burden on yourself, old fellow. It probably would have made no difference. And anyhow you *did* send her in the end. Bless you!”

“But too late!”

“No, it was in time.” There was a curious significance in the deliberate words. “There’s no need to divide the blame, if we go back far enough it all rests on my shoulders, and I don’t want to carry it.”

“You can’t—fear!” said Lawrence in a low voice, “but—I wonder, do you—hate?”

Anthony shook the ashes out of his pipe thoughtfully, then he stood up.

“Let’s go back, Lawrence, and talk it over with her. There’s nothing gained in discussing private likes and dislikes, besides I can’t hate Andrea, I’ve know him too long.”

Lawrence followed him down the hill with dim wonder in his mind. If his companion neither hated nor feared, what did he do? In what possible light could he regard the man whose very name made Lawrence tremble?

They did not, however, talk over matters that night with Honor. She was nowhere to be found when they returned, and after some searching, Anthony dis-

covered her in the deserted studio. A fire had been lit there, and was dying out under the smothering weight of grey ash and charred paper.

Honor knelt before it with a white drawn face and compressed lips. She sprang to her feet and faced Anthony, as if she would shield the smouldering fire from his eyes.

"My dear!" he took her in his arms, in spite of her slight protest. "What is it? What's wrong, and what are you doing?"

The look in her eyes was not good to see, but she clung to him now and tried to laugh.

"It's nothing—much, Anthony—only—that I've burnt my book—the new one!"

"Honor!" he cried aghast.

"I meant to alter it," she said hurriedly, but with her eyes still fixed on him as if she would draw courage from him. "It had been finished. I promised it to them long ago. They wrote last week—I hadn't got all of it—some was gone. At first I thought I could remember and write it again—and I couldn't, any more than you can—"

"But where is it? Where did you lose it?" he demanded, for the thing sounded too wild for reason.

Her look never wavered but her voice shook.

"It is—somewhere in *his* house—I was writing there that morning—perhaps he burnt it—perhaps he kept it."

"But, dearest, you could have asked. He would have sent it to you at once. You had only to ask."

"To ask!" The colour mounted slowly from neck to face.

"To ask!" she faltered, "to get in touch with him again—to ask something of him!"

"Honor!"

Her hand gripped his hard, and her face was piteous.

"Anthony, he would have made terms—I know it—held it as a hostage—my book. I had to burn it—to make sure of myself."

Then she broke into wild weeping and incoherent words.

"I had to, I had to! Try and understand, Anthony. It was the book—or our lives that had to go—yours and mine! He would have got between us again. It was so good, so good, but held too much of him—it was spoilt for me—so I burnt it! And now I'm free and there's no need to ask him for anything—but it hurts, it hurts, Anthony."

Fear and pain! They seemed the very footprints of Andrea's ruthless unconcerned progress! For the moment Anthony felt he had lied in that last answer to Lawrence's question back there on the hill.

CHAPTER II.

MARKING TIME.

THERE was no gathering together of the scattered grey ashes and no reweaving of the magic thread of her creation. Honor faced the result of her strange sacrifice bravely, but Gateways became hateful to her, for it was here her book had been born in its first crude form, here it had quickened into life under Andrea's insidious guidance. Some day, perhaps, the joy with which she had entered on possession of her little house would return, but for the present it was destroyed. She knew that even Anthony did not entirely understand the reasons that had prompted her destructive deed; perhaps, indeed, she hardly grasped their full import herself, for she was largely a creature of instincts, and instinct had much to do with that action. It was not merely the horror with which she still regarded Andrea's usage of Lawrence, but fear also had its say, less, perhaps, fear of Andrea than of herself, and her openness to the diluted poison of his words. Behind all this again there lay a subtle thread of disloyalty to Anthony woven up in the book, and to bring it to life was to profit by his own bitter loss, for had it not been the bait that was used to keep them apart?

Nevertheless, the book had been the outcome of her mastering creative passion which is the one power strong enough to try forces with the lords of love and life and death. She grieved for it as a mother might for a stillborn child, and then she found what comfort she could in telling herself that it was the least price she could pay, to clear her soul of that sense of contamination that haunted her.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW PHASE.

"WHAT ever induced you to send it to them, and still more what ever induced them to hang it, passes my understanding."

The speaker, Giddenson (one of the leading lights in the latest extremes of Art and the arranger of their special exhibition), looked decidedly disconsolate. He had met Andrea Bradon in the courtyard of Burlington House and lost no time in declaring his grievance.

"Come, Giddenson, is that a gibe at them, or at me?" retorted Andrea, with a little malicious twinkle in his eyes.

"Poof!" Giddenson did not trouble to explain which. He frowned and fidgetted, and dug the point of his neatly furled umbrella into the ground.

"What brings you here to the camp of the enemy?" went on Andrea, lightly.

"I came to see—it."

The other shuddered.

"This is fame indeed! Well, now you have seen it, what do you think of it? Don't keep me in suspense."

His mockery was so open and flagrant that Giddenson could not but beware of it.

"You might have sent it to us," he remonstrated, rather sulkily.

"I hadn't the face to," returned Andrea, with deepest gravity. "Would you have really hung it?" He assumed an anxious air.

Giddenson flashed a resentful look at him.

"Take care, Giddenson, remember *this*," with a

wave of his hand to the building behind them. "This isn't the only institution in London that's open to the glamour of a name!"

His mockery somehow robbed his words of offence.

The other man prodded the ground again.

"Why did you send it here?" he repeated.

"For a joke—because it was so preposterous. I am going now to look at it."

With a familiar wave of the hand he turned to enter the building, and Giddenson looked after him with that vague feeling of discomfort that an interview with Andrea Bradon usually left on him.

On the staircase within Andrea met another artist, an older man, an orthodox sober-minded painter, who had done good work in his day, though he produced little now, seeming content to watch the vigorous if eccentric growth of the younger school. He, too, stopped Bradon and accosted him with nearly the same question as he had put to Giddenson.

"What are you doing here?"

Andrea met his gaze with steady steely eyes, and there was neither mockery nor malice in them now.

"I've come to see how it looks," he replied, his lips straightening slightly.

The elder man hesitated, then turned and remounted the staircase by his side.

Andrea made no comment, and they went through the crowded rooms together. It was only twelve noon, but the majority of people seemed to have gripped an idea that the Academy would be empty at that hour and accordingly filled it.

At the far end of the big room hung Andrea's picture, and a little knot of people formed and melted, and re-gathered there again, minute after minute. Mountjoy—Andrea's companion—noticed at once that, as they approached, Andrea listened to, and watched these people, and that he never looked towards

the picture at all. Fragments of talk came to them as they stood on the outskirts of the group.

"Here it is!—Isn't it wonderful? . . . "Now, *that's* painting" . . . "Oh, I always find Bradon's things *so* suggestive!" . . . "Look at the originality of the man—he's got soul—that's what most of them lack." And so on. Presently, an old grey-haired lady came back from a nearer view. She was standing just in front of Andrea, and she leant on the arm of a very evident Art student.

"Well, my dear, if that's the *great* picture you are all talking about, I prefer a lesser one. I don't in the least know what it means, and I am certain no one, even the artist, ever saw anything like it—even in his mind."

She passed on and Andrea's eyes followed her through the crowd.

"There's the only bit of sound judgment here," he said softly. "Come and look at the thing, Mountjoy, if you can stand it again."

They pushed through to a clearer view, but Mountjoy watched his companion's face rather than the picture, and he saw it harden with scorn and impatient contempt that was not directed at the admiration of the bystanders.

The picture was of a girl leaning against a bronze column in some faintly indicated building, that might be a temple or might equally well be a mere suggestion of stage scenery. She was clad in bronze-colour gauze over gold, her hair was bronze, and her brown eyes had a burnished tone in them. The curious thing in the picture was the embroidery which curled and wound over her dress in strange arabesques, and in the repetition of this arabesque in the tortuous coils of her hair, in the wreathed capital of the pillar, in the oddly suggested curtain, in the broken pattern of light and shade, in the very composition of the picture itself.

And beyond that obtrusive restless oddity, the painting itself was thin and unsubstantial, and unsatisfying.

Mountjoy knew as he watched Andrea that the latter had to compel his eyes to face the picture, which was undoubtedly a portrait, and that not an item of its flagrant trickery escaped its creator's scrutiny and scorn.

At last Andrea turned to him.

"Well?" he demanded, "what have you to say?"

"It's beastly bad," returned Mountjoy soberly, "and you know it, Bradon. Did you send it for a joke? I think it was bad taste, if you did."

"She wanted it sent—and at least it does not matter what's said of it here. In Giddenson's show it would have been accepted in deadly earnest!"

"You think this hanging committe jocular?" His tone was a little cold.

"Jocular? Heaven preserve them, no! But they think *that*—represents a new thing in Art, and being mine, they hang it!"

"You aren't an R.A., are you?"

Andrea shook his head with an affected shudder but his laugh was not mirthful. They had come out of the big room into the sculpture gallery, which was almost deserted, and Mountjoy saw now that Andrea looked decidedly shaken. He agreed readily to sitting down.

"Why did you do it?" he asked kindly.

Andrea shrugged his shoulders.

"It didn't look quite so bad in the studio. At least, I thought not."

"But you know it's hopeless work—for you."

"It's clever," Andrea insisted defiantly; "It took some doing."

"Good heavens, it took too much! It would be clever if you were at the foot of the ladder."

"I am." He raised his hard straight eyes to his companion again. "I'm at the very foot—of a new one!"

"Go back to the old, you haven't worked that out yet."

Andrea laughed and rose.

"You are mixing your metaphors. I'm going." But he lingered still.

"I wish you'd explain."

"My dear fellow, what is there to explain? I paint an abominable picture—according to you—the public go wild over it, my sitter is flattered. The reproductions will sell like wildfire if she agrees to it—and she will—Giddenson envies it, the papers rhapsodise! It takes an old lady from the country to find out the truth about it, that it hasn't any!"

"All the same you hate it, Bradon."

Again there was a little flicker of something in Andrea's eyes that made Mountjoy uneasy. If it had not been so impossible he would have thought it arose from fear.

What was he afraid of? Mountjoy looked after the upright slim figure as it disappeared between the curtains into the Entrance Hall, with a sense of unmerited compassion. Could it be that Bradon had reached the zenith of his power—was on the decline—and knew it?

Andrea went out with a hazy intention of returning home, but there seemed no purpose in that, so he paid a call instead—on the original of that Bronze Lady now hanging on the Academy walls.

She was not wearing bronze now, but lizard green. Her room, however, was full of odd Japaneze bronzes and brown gold hangings, shot with green and her bronze hair, with its elaborate coils, still seemed to hold the intricate pattern of the arabesque.

She was eager to see him and insistent on one question, as he knew she would be.

"You will let Repton have the picture, won't you?"

You can name your own price, you know—he wants it.”

“Do you want him to have it?” demanded Andrea, lazily.

She paused, and frowned a little.

“Since I am going to marry him—yes!”

“Of course, I think it’s horrid—and all that,” she went on, smoothing out the frown, “but it’s so clever and original.”

“And you always wanted to be painted by Andrea Bradon,” concluded Andrea for her, with brutal frankness but in the most soothing of voices.

For the moment she looked a little scared, and it struck Andrea that if she were an animal she would put back her ears.

“You are horrid,” she said, with a pout.

“Too horrid to be given lunch?”

“Even horrid people must eat I suppose,” she rejoined, and added quickly, “but I am alone.”

He gave the very faintest possible shadow of a smile.

“Bargains are best driven over food, you know.”

He lunched with her as he had intended to do when he called. He had to come to some decision as to whether he should sell the thing or burn it, and he chose to come to it here. These fools of people admired it—because he’d painted it! dared to regard it as a fair sample of his genius—how he despised them! Lord Repton, for example, what did he know about painting, good or bad? His fiancée had been painted by Bradon and he considered it his duty to buy the picture. Had that been all, however, Andrea would never have sold it. Had the Bronze Lady displayed the least indication of secret disapproval and disgust he would have burnt it, but while Lord Repton took it for “new Art,” and said vaguely: “Things like that live, you know!” the original was taken up with the notoriety

of having sat for such a remarkable picture to such a famous man. How he mocked at them! Let them have it if they liked—the fools! He could very well do with the money.

They telephoned to Lord Repton after lunch to come round and confer about it, and eventually the bargain was struck, if bargain it could be called: Repton purchasing an artistically valueless picture, for an enormous sum and Andrea selling his reputation to gratify his scorn of himself and them.

A few days later he met Anthony in Dover Street.

No one would have guessed that Andrea for a brief moment wondered if he'd stop or not. His greeting was entirely natural and unconcerned.

"Beaumont told me you were at Wallingford," he said; "that was rather a piece of luck for you. Are you all right again?"

"Quite, thanks. Are you going club-wards, if so, we can go together?"

Andrea agreed with the faintest little nod.

If any other man in the world whom he had treated as he had treated his cousin should have greeted him with such an entire oblivion of wrong sustained, he felt he would rather have hated him or despised him; as it was, he felt sensible of an odd little feeling of penitence and perhaps relief.

"I see in the paper you've sent a picture to the Academy," remarked Anthony, as they turned into Bond Street.

"If you have not seen it—don't!" returned the other quickly. "It's a beastly thing! How's Lawrence?" he asked abruptly, without taking the trouble to be unconcerned.

"He's a good deal more himself, but he won't play yet. It's a question of time."

Andrea stopped to look at some Japanese vases in a window and pointed out their perfections.

Then, as they went on, he remarked with his rather crooked smile.

"You had better say what's on your mind, Anthony. It's as private here as it will be in the Club, and you'll feel better."

"You mean, you will," said Anthony, quite unmoved. "What is there to say? If I called you every black name under heaven it wouldn't heal Lawrence's mind, or —"

"Or—what? Go on!"

"Or hurt you," continued Anthony, refusing the bait offered. "It's more to the point that I should tell you what I've decided about his future."

They were at the steps of the Club now; for a moment Andrea thought of refusing to enter.

"It will save a letter," Anthony said, in his quiet way. "You'd better come in."

They found a comparatively isolated corner, and Andrea began to smoke. He looked a tiny bit sulky. Years ago, when they were boys, Anthony had had just that same quiet way of ignoring his many sins and dealing with the results of them in a distractingly impartial manner.

"Lawrence is acting as secretary to me at present, and later on, in the autumn, I propose sending him abroad for two years, where he can work at his music—and other things too—he's not had enough education yet. I shall make him an allowance of two hundred a year and pay his expenses. If you want to do anything yourself in the future, you can offer, of course; but I don't think he'll take it—yet." In spite of the hold which he had over himself a rather stern note crept into Anthony's voice, which he found hard to quench. The wrong to himself he had forgiven, the wrong to Lawrence he found it harder to pardon; but the situation was in his hands just as long as he could keep from expressed disapproval, and he knew it. An-

drea knew it too, and longed to exasperate him to hot words, and yet he too refrained. He had not yet forgotten the picture he might have had to paint.

"There's no occasion for telling him, if I added to it, that I see," he protested resentfully.

"Lawrence trusts me!" returned Anthony simply.

Another little awkward pause ensued. There were a hundred things Andrea wanted to know, and not a question did he dare ask in face of that quiet unemotional attitude, that neither judged nor exonerated him, but just left him.

"I hope you won't mind," said Anthony suddenly; "but I am having the picture—the Victory one, brought to England. I feel it's safer here even if the room doesn't suit it so well—and I wanted it."

He had found it well during the last few minutes to keep the memory of that picture to the front of his mind. Andrea owed it more than he knew.

He went on to explain what was being done at the Villa in the way of restoration.

"You wouldn't care to sell it back to me?" demanded Andrea slowly.

Anthony hesitated.

"Picture and all?"

"That mightn't go well with the new style of work," he declared flippantly. "I don't want it."

"May I think it over—if you are serious?"

"As long as you like. I shall let the house in Abbey Road. Does Lawrence want his piano?"

"Bechstein would store it till he does."

Andrea rose.

"Well, I'm serious about Guardini, so think it over. Only I name my own price, please."

He looked straight at the other, and Anthony understood in a flash the meaning of the offer. It was an odd little spark of pride that recoiled from the thought that the son he had wronged, should be helped by the

man he had also injured. There was something fantastic in it and yet Anthony hesitated to set it aside.

"It's the seller's place to name a price, I thought!" he said, laughing. "However, I'll hear yours."

Andrea named it instantly and it was the precise price Anthony had paid for the Villa and the picture together. There had been no very great difference between the two sums.

"I'll let you know," he said thoughtfully.

They proceeded to part. Andrea, by now, accepted the fact that his cousin refused him the right to mention Honor, or hear her name. He struggled to resist the unspoken edict in vain and finally gave it up with dumb impatient wonder at himself.

Perhaps Anthony realised something of the struggle, or else his natural kindliness was too much for his judicial judgment, but as they parted, he said.

"Honor is well. Wallingford seems to suit her, and Alice is with her getting it straight."

He did not pretend to speak casually or to spare his cousin anything but decent anxiety.

Andrea nodded a little grimly, and went off without further comment.

It was only afterwards that Anthony realised they had not shaken hands.

CHAPTER IV.

A SECOND RATE ARTIST.

ANTHONY accepted the offer to buy back Guardini, and Andrea went over to Italy to take possession of his old home and order further alterations, and the addition of a new studio.

But he could not settle there. He drifted back to Paris, there established himself, and painted the Lady of Empty Beauty. It was an admirable companion to his Bronze Lady. Here, too, he painted the very realistic and unpleasing "Faun," which bordered so near on the grotesque that the critics were afraid either to ignore it or treat it seriously. Here, too, he commenced those subtle black and white series of "The Decorators," which fetched a fabulous price later on in America. But in all that he set hand to at this period, there is that over elaboration of detail, that subtle bizarre feeling of untruth and brain effort which, while it never seems to have affected their monetary value, must always leave these outputs of his genius at a discount with the highest standard of criticism.

It seemed as if he delighted in his own cleverness, gave it full rein, subordinated his subjects to his own command of technique and made every effort to convince himself that the pleasure of pandering to his own skill was equivalent to the joy of bending to that full sweeping force of the Master Passion which had been his.

Then one day the genuine thing came on him and he fell to work with the old selfless concentration of brain, body, and soul.

It was then he found something was missing. His

brain was keen, alert, and eager as ever, his hands as skilled and untiring, but something failed him. He could not get at complete union with his own thoughts. He saw his subject, as it were, in a haze of artificial light, and the clean, simple meaning of things was lost to him. A devastating panic got hold of him. He fought through it, and produced something which would have been good enough for the world to wonder at, if he gave it the chance, but he blotted it out instead, and began over again.

Then with the suddenness that marked all his actions now, he left Paris and went to visit the Spanish Convent where hung his St. Theresa. There he spent two days contemplating it, and went from there to Guadagni in tragic, impotent despair. How was it done? What had happened to his artist soul that he had lost the power of visioning simple, clear, beautiful lines like that?

He fell a prey to a very frenzy of creation. Ideas, Forms, Immaterial Beauty, panting for liberty, everywhere matter around him crying to be isolated from the flux of things, and given a place and security amongst the eternal verities. The agony of it and his fierce, tireless struggle to see, began to tell on him.

There was no outside help available. The few who saw his work at this time found nothing lacking in it and rejoiced that the odd phase, which had held him in Paris, had passed. But the failure was visible enough to Andrea.

He stood looking at one such failure one evening, till depression seized him, and he gave up the consideration of it, and went out on to the new *loggia* outside his painting room.

The day had been more than usually unsatisfactory. To begin with, his domestic arrangements were far from perfect, he was unused to coping with them and missed Lawrence more every month, but that was a

grievance to which he was growing accustomed. It was not on his mind now.

It was a hot evening; the air was heavy with scents and the stillness of the world was oppressive. Far below, he could see the green waters of the little lake reflecting, like a burnished mirror, the thin light of a few stars. The last goats had come over the mountain, a few specks of light twinkled out on the plain. Andrea was unutterably weary. The fruitless struggle was wearing down the edge of his passion to vanishing point. Soon it would be gone and there would be no use attempting anything more for perhaps months. Almost he wished it had gone.

Perhaps he had made a mistake in coming to Guardini at all. He had told Honor once it was not a good place for work, and he had been at least half serious. . . . Honor! . . .

The locked door of his mind opened at last. . . .

He lay still on a long lounge chair, watching the smoke of his cigarette mount upwards—very still and very terribly alert.

It was Honor, of course, that was missing. In some way he did not trouble to understand she had hitherto supplied a link in his brain between his vision and his interpretation of it. She was, as it were, actually part of his creative mind and it was out of the completeness of their mutual understanding, that he had produced work on the highest level of his great genius. Lacking her, he produced at its lowest level. There was no measuring the distance between the two points. He made, indeed, no calculations at all. He just took in the fact and held it.

These months that he had been working, cut off from her influence as he had not been cut off from it by her marriage, or mere absence, had been a great deal worse than wasted. He had pretended to produce—*pictures!* How he hated them! And yet, and yet—

if he had to live without Honor's influence in the future it was the best he could hope to do.

He dropped his cigarette and gazed fixedly at his right hand—that skilful servant that did his bidding. A curious fancy came to him, that it might lose its cunning, that he might indeed lose *it*. A one-handed man!

It was a gruesome idea.

If in the future it were going to play false to the one religion of his life he might as well cut it off, however! That was his odd, crude thought! Then suddenly he put his hands over his face and shivered.

If the best was to be out of his reach, he must never touch his brushes again—never. It was like asking a blind man to daub canvas with unmeaning splashes. Just so long as he did not know the best was unattainable he could go on, but now he knew—second best?—he who had touched the summit?—a thousand times no!

He knew so little of mental suffering—of suffering in any form—that it frightened him. It was not like the strain of his black nightmare at the time of Lawrence's disappearance. It was far deeper—it was inside of him!

His misery evolved itself gradually into one simple issue: Second-rate work—or renunciation!

It was his own fault that he was cut off from Honor. He did not blink at that fact at all, and he had certainly no room for repentance or regret, so far, it was the result that tortured him.

To renounce the one sovereign mistress of his soul, the one thing that made calls on his honour, his conscience, his faith! It had hitherto taken all his poor stock of these commodities but he had given faithfully and ungrudgingly such as he had. If he had not spared others, he had also not spared himself in the cause. It was no light problem he faced, it was the problem

vouchsafed to him, and to that, all other relations of life must be subordinated!

So much so, that he sat down at once and wrote to Honor.

Half way through his letter he awoke to the fact that it was not such plain sailing as he had been thinking. There was not only Honor, there was Anthony. Anthony had after all been very decent to him. . . . He had intended just writing to Honor and sending her the chapters. . . . Perhaps it would be more decent to approach Anthony first under the circumstances. . . . He was wise enough to know his chances were poor without Anthony's support. . . .

He hunted for a telegram form and could not find a foreign one, so he wrote it out on a slip of paper to have as short a delay as possible, when he got to the office.

"Can you come over? Want you particularly."

He read this, which had been the mere bare transmission of his immediate thought, and for once he was conscious of the inordinate egotism of it. He walked to and fro with rather a petulant air and then found a time-table.

With a little secret mock at himself that just covered a fugitive sense of shame, he re-wrote his wire.

"Can you meet me at Brown's Hotel Wednesday evening at six? Please wire there."

There was just time, if he packed at once, to catch the mid-day train for Paris from Brescia. Decidedly, when once Andrea had made up his mind on a course of action he did not let the grass grow under his feet.

Anthony considered for some time before he showed Andrea's telegram to Honor. When he did, there was the quick flush and involuntary straightening of her lips that the least mention of the name betrayed in her.

She gave him back the wire without a word.

"You won't mind going to the Lawsons' without me?"

"Yes, I shall," she said quickly, "I shall mind very much, but it won't make any difference."

"I can't very well refuse Andrea."

Honor laughed.

"No," she said in a low voice, "no one refuses him anything."

She would not say more; Anthony knew she hated his going.

It was only when Andrea was actually in London again that he began to see clearly the difficulties in his way, difficulties he had accepted with so airy an indifference. He arrived only two hours before the time he had named to Anthony, and though he found a wire awaiting him, saying his cousin was coming, he felt curiously unassured by it.

After all, what had he to say to Anthony? He wished he had not sent to him. It would have been better to write. It was only a desire to hasten the fulfilment of his wishes that made him seek a personal interview. And supposing Anthony refused? Andrea knew quite well the majority of men would refuse his request as an unpardonable impertinence. Andrea was very little used to considering himself in the wrong, still less used to owning it and he did not like the experience one bit. It was a very nasty physic indeed, but it had to be taken if that right hand of his was to serve him any more. He looked at it curiously, thinking of the odd fancy concerning it, that had been in his mind.

And if, after all, Anthony did refuse him? Or Honor?

But he would not entertain the thought. He stamped with impatience at it. They must see, they must be made to see, that wretched little personal quarrels and likes and dislikes counted for nothing, besides the tre-

menhous necessity of Andrea Pradon's producing the best that lay in him to produce.'

Fortified with this idea he went quickly into the sitting room he had taken, to meet Anthony, and he held the letter he had written to Honor in his hand.

This time they shook hands. Anthony's first remark was prompted by the marked change in the face before him. Andrea was unaware of it himself, but the pleasant mask with the mocking soul looking out behind it, seemed for the time wiped out. The anxiety that supplanted it was grim and real, and plainly apparent, only his voice retained its old light quality.

"If there hadn't been something wrong I shouldn't have sent for you," he said rather bitterly, "I don't suppose you wanted to come, but I'm awfully obliged that you have."

He halted awkwardly for him.

"Well, what is it, any how?" Anthony asked, feeling contradiction were waste of time.

"I want you to take a letter to Honor—from me."

He made no attempt at diplomacy at all when it came to the point. He blurted it out like a veritable tyro, but what most surprised Anthony when he recovered from the shock of the cool audacity of the thing, was that Andrea was actually shaking with eagerness and purpose.

He was quite incapable of answering for a moment, and Andrea stood looking fixedly at the envelope he held in his hand and presently went on.

"I know perfectly well you think I'm taking an infernal liberty, after what's happened, and it doesn't end there. I'm writing to ask Honor to be friends with me again—to write to me, to let me see her. . . . because unless she does, I can't paint any more." His last effort to control his voice melted, and with it the last touch of aloofness; he spoke rapidly with passionate earnestness and quick gestures.

"I must make you understand. . . Honor's like a second pair of eyes to me; when I'm in touch with her I see all sorts of things I can't see without her, though I must see them if I am to work. . . Look at all these damnable fifteen months, I've done *nothing*, nothing but ruin my reputation! I tell you I can't *paint*. . . If you were to see what I'd done, you'd recognise it's the sort of work I did before I knew her, only *then* it did mean promise and now it means—death! It's like that really to me. I don't know anything about souls, but if I have one, it's tied up somehow in my work, and if I can't do that, it will die. Tell her, and give her the letter, Anthony. Don't bother about what I deserve or don't deserve—not that you ever have—but try and see what it means, for if I can't have her friendship, God knows if I'll be strong enough to give up work as I ought to do. Take it, Anthony."

He pushed the letter across the table with shaking eager hands.
difficult to speak.

Anthony put his own hand on it, but still found it
"I might have written direct," urged Andrea, interpreting his silence wrongly. "I didn't because I thought I'd done badly enough by you as it was. . . You can make what terms you like with me, you and she, if only you'll let me see her. It will be all right then. If she wants me to say I'm sorry, or show it, I'll do what I can."

"She shall have the letter, of course, Andrea."
Anthony's voice was husky and uncertain; he leant over and picked it up. Then their eyes met. Andrea's look fell first and he suddenly collapsed into a chair, and laid his face on his arm.

"Look here, old fellow," said Anthony, gently leaning over and touching him. "It's no use to promise too much. I'll give Honor the letter and tell her what

I think, but it's only fair to tell you, too, I don't know in the least how she will take it. You know she burnt her book because she wouldn't ask you for the chapters she left at Abbey Road."

"If she doesn't burn the letter before she reads it, it will be all right," muttered Andrea, without moving. "Only don't let her keep me waiting." He stretched out his right hand and clasped and unclasped it oddly. "I have the chapters," he said in a minute, raising his head. "I nearly sent them to her before I left Guardini. Why did she burn the book? It was awfully good."

Did he know, or did he not? Anthony's face stiffened. He looked sharply at Andrea, and saw there were tears in his eyes, and Andrea blinked them away and said in a naïvely forlorn tone:

"How beastly it is, feeling things too much!"

Then inconsequently he demanded by what train Anthony was returning.

Anthony had not had the slightest intention of returning that night and said so. Andrea looked blank. But Anthony stuck to his point. He promised, however, to go by the earliest morning train and give Honor the letter at once.

"I can wait in, and you can wire, or perhaps she will," Andrea said hopefully.

"But, my dear fellow," exclaimed Anthony aghast, "she may want—hours or days—to think."

Andrea shook his head.

"She'll know at once." And he added, with a return to his passionate earnestness:

"You'll say what you can for me, Anthony—though not one man in a thousand would, or would understand!"

"I don't understand very well, as it is," Anthony answered, a trifle drily; "but I never could see any use of hanging on to a sense of wrong if there was a decent way out."

Then Andrea made a last surprising statement.

"I don't love her, you know, Anthony," he said, in rather an odd voice; "neither in your way nor mine; it's just that I am incomplete as an artist without her. If I'd married her, I should have lost her."

It was perhaps the most flagrantly impossible thing he had said in all that impossible interview, and it was not perfectly true, though for the moment, Andrea firmly believed it was, which was perhaps why his cousin believed it also.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEMAND.

HONOR was seated on the high bridge at the end of the walled in garden, the same spot where four years ago Anthony had made his inadequate and surprising proposal to her. She leant against the rail and looked down on the glowing embroidery of flowers below her. She already loved Wallingford with that mystic joy which certain places bestow on certain minds, irrespective of association, but also she had no associations at all with it that were not good, and made for peace and abiding content. Only today she was conscious of the first little wave of unrest and uncertainty. She wished Anthony had not gone to meet Andrea. What was the use of her destroying her book if it were not to keep clear of the remotest thought of him, and here, in the midst of her beautiful life and content, he still intruded, if only in the form of demand on her husband. She tried hard to shut him out of her thoughts and to give her mind entirely to the purpose for which she had come here, which was to decide if the gathering creative force within her was to be given liberty and form in a new book to take the place of the lost one.

Wonderful fancies and thoughts floated before her, crystalized for the moment into shape and melted again; fugitive fancies that hovered over the borderland of discoveries, and tempted her thereto. But though the entrancing pleasure of the vision was there, she lacked the urgent will to enchain it, or rather that will was still within control. It was hers to do or not to do. The mastery still lay with her.

It was not the lack of energy produced by ease, content and overmuch physical beauty, as at Guardini, it was a more deliberate weighing of the merits of the vision. She must be very certain of its worth now. Life was too precious to be given regardless of the cost.

The iron gate at the end of the garden clanged to, and she heard Anthony's footstep coming down the path. He must have taken a very early train from town, she thought.

He joined her on the bridge and her slight grievance with him slipped away from her at his greeting.

She pointed out different little things that had struck her in the garden below, related the events of yesterday and set a curb to her curiosity which most undoubtedly broke into flame at sight of him.

He answered her patiently, but at last he said:

"Honor, if you will take it, I have something to give you."

He held out the letter and she put her hands behind her back.

"Why did you bring it?"

"Because one has no right to refuse to hear what he has to say."

"Do you know what's in it?" She still held back with distress in her eyes.

"I know the purport of it, and I want you to read it before I say anything."

Very reluctantly she took it from him and broke the seal, even then without looking at it. Her own extreme agitation frightened her. Why should she mind like this? Andrea was less than nothing to her, she should rather have been indifferent.

She made a last appeal to her husband.

"You read it, Anthony. You can tell me."

He shook his head.

"My dear, it's not fair to him. Why are you afraid?"

He can't hurt you, but you can hurt him, very bitterly."

She hung her head, opened the letter, and read it.

"MY DEAR HONOR:

"Whatever you may choose to think of me as a man, you'll never deny that as long as I knew you I could paint, and that I was an artist, what ever else I was not. Also you know what that stands for in my life. Well, I can't paint any more, I think your anger with me gets in the way. I'm just living on that cleverness you used to abuse and that's death to better things as you very well know. I am like a man living at the bottom of a well who's forgotten what the sky looks like. If you'll only let me see you again, and go on being friends as of old, I shall remember, and see the sky, and be able to paint it. I've tried hard to find some one else to do what you did for me, but there isn't any one. It's you or none. I think my soul was born blind and you are its eyes. You wouldn't refuse to help a blind kitten, and I can't believe you'll refuse to help me. For it means if you do, I shall never, never paint anything again, unless it's—second-best. You understand too well, Honor, what the agony of that sort of failure would be, to condemn me to it. I daresay I am every bit as bad as you like to imagine, but I've never been a bad artist. I ought to cease to be one if you won't help me but I doubt my strength of nerve. Don't put me to the test. Be friends.

"ANDREA."

She stood twisting the oddly frank appeal in her restless hands and Anthony watched her face anxiously. He wanted her to make her decision unaided if she could.

"He's a man as well as an artist," she said at last, with real misery in her voice; "and he's cruel and untrue, and how can one know he really means this?"

"One knows when one sees him," Anthony told her

gravely. "And," he added slowly, "it's best to remember how much his pictures mean."

"Read it." She put the letter in his hand.

When he had finished it, they stood looking down on the garden without speaking. Honor thought of Lawrence, but Anthony saw only Andrea's face with the old cynical indifference wiped out, and the urgent need in his eyes.

He told her of the interview very simply and exactly, neither adding to it nor diminishing a single point.

"He hasn't really changed a bit inwardly, he's just as selfish and egotistical as ever; he doesn't even pretend it's remorse or decent repentance that sends him to you, he's ready to say anything you like to gain his end. He always had an odd shut up pride of his own as a boy, and he's just laid it down for you to trample on, if you like, because he's got a strange idea in his head that he can't paint properly without your help. Painting is his job, and it's the only thing apparently over which he has a conscience, and in which he has any faith. It's his religion, Honor, and he'd go to any length and he would sacrifice anything to serve it. He'd part from you, in just the same spirit if you stood in It's way, instead of helping It."

"Yes," she knew that, and felt she might have resented it and did not.

"He's nearly spoilt our lives, and has spoilt Lawrence's, Anthony."

She was pleading against her heart, fighting rather to maintain the righteousness of her long attitude of hostility.

Anthony kept silence a moment, and then he spoke very slowly.

"Other people can't spoil our lives unless we let them, and Lawrence will be strong in the end. But has it never struck you, Honor, how absurd it is for us to think we can treat people as they deserve? How can

The garden became still more peaceful and full of faint shadowy voices.

* * * *

"Will you send a wire to him yourself?" he asked her presently, and she started.

"Now? Today?"

He smiled a little oddly.

"My dear, he intends waiting at the hotel till he hears!"

"And he just wants to come to us here?"

"When you'll have him."

She sighed.

"Not till Lawrence has gone, Anthony."

"No, not till then."

Lawrence was going abroad. He had developed greatly in those months at Wallingford. His boyishness had slipped from him and left him more responsible, more self-contained, and less plastic. Not even Honor knew now all that went on behind his grave, rather absent-minded exterior. His open boyish devotion to her changed subtly, and it was Anthony who guessed the meaning of it and not Honor.

It was his own desire to go abroad. He chose to go to Germany, and he chose to go to a town where music was the main atmosphere. So far, it was good but he had not yet touched a note of the piano himself.

Anthony knew he must tell him of their renewed relationships with his father and he rather dreaded it. He was anxious that nothing on their side should break the tie he had formed with Andrea's son, and that as much for Andrea's sake as Lawrence's own.

He spoke of all this to Honor as they walked up and down in the moonlight after dinner.

Presently she stopped him.

"Hush," she said softly, holding up her hand.

Out of the open drawingroom windows there came

the sound of a few isolated chords. They ceased, were repeated, and presently woven into a vague air.

It was restrained, markedly grave, and it made Honor want to weep.

"Oh, I'm glad, so glad," she whispered. "I don't mind Andrea's coming now."

He played fitfully, with long breaks in between, for perhaps an hour. Then there was a stronger pause still and Anthony went in to him.

Lawrence was gazing absently at the wall in front of him with his hands lying idly on his knees. There was only one light in the room, and his face was in shadow.

He knew who had entered, but he did not look around.

"Is it coming back, Lawrence?"

Lawrence put his hands on the keys again.

"I can't say. They are so stiff." He spoke dreamily and added in a lower tone. "It may never come again—the desire you know—but I've been thinking—perhaps one ought to be ready—on the mere chance—it's desertion otherwise.

"Yes. I learnt that from a picture. I wonder how you got hold of it."

Lawrence's eyes wandered to the opposite wall again. There was a long narrow picture hanging there. It represented a stretch of country under an evening sky lit with faint stars. There was one figure in it but it was merely a part of the waiting, quiet peace of the whole.

"I've never noticed that properly till today. I was sitting over there and I felt the peace of it sink into me—It seemed to ask for a voice."

Anthony was bold.

"That's one of his few landscapes; one of his best, I think."

Lawrence's hands fell on his knees again.

"I—I felt it was—at the back of my mind."

"I saw him today, Lawrence," Anthony went on steadily; "and—we are going to be friends again. It seems he can't paint without Honor's friendship. He's not had an easy time."

Lawrence kept silence and the other put his hand on his shoulder.

"You won't let it separate you from us?"

"Does Honor wish to—see him?"

"She knows we haven't any right to refuse."

He looked again at the peaceful landscape. So did Lawrence.

"I need not meet him yet?"

"Never till you wish to—but I think all that dread will go when the Great Desire is with you again. You people who are servants of this dominant Passion of creation don't seem to have any medium. When *It* is there there's no room for anything else, when *It* is gone you are at the mercy of everything."

"That's why we hate anything that stands between us and *IT*."

Anthony knew that to be true.

CHAPTER VI.

RECONCILIATION.

Andrea passed the week with what patience he could muster. Honor has signed her telegram but she had not written. Anthony, however, had sent a brief note in which he stated frankly that Lawrence was starting for Germany on Monday, and that they considered it better to delay Andrea's visit till he had gone; that he, Anthony, would be in London on Monday night, and proposed they should travel down together on Tuesday.

Andrea, therefore, had to make the best of the delay, though it seemed to him little short of wanton extravagance to waste time like that. Those eighteen empty months hung round his neck like a chain.

The two dined together on the Monday night, and it struck Anthony that Andrea had decidedly aged. Also for the first time, he realized how very little of affectation there was in his cousin's usual attitude of detached mockery. This rather nervous and pre-occupied man who made visible and almost pathetic efforts to conceal his irritability was a stranger to him. Before the evening was over, he had begun to be decidedly sorry for Andrea.

By the next day, however, Andrea had apparently regained his more natural aspect, though it hardly rang true yet to Anthony, who now and again caught a fleeting anxiety in his eyes, veiling for an instant his recovered spirits. He talked fluently enough on the

journey down, but dropped into silence as they turned into the gates of Wallingford.

Honor was not at hand to meet them and, as they crossed the hall towards the library, Andrea remarked with a queer little laugh:

"Do you remember, Anthony, when we used to be 'sent up' by that brute of a tutor to see your father in there?" He nodded in the direction of the study. Anthony looked round.

"Not so bad as that, is it?"

Andrea laughed again.

The library was empty, but the windows opening into the garden stood wide open.

"Honor's out there," remarked Anthony, who had already enquired. "Will you care to go out, I must see to these letters?"

Andrea stepped out through the window without a word.

Honor was at the far end of the green walk, looking up at a great group of delphiniums. She saw him coming but made no movement towards him, only she stained her hand with the flowers she held, crushing them against her dress, and the colour rose and ebbed from her face.

He came very rapidly towards her and the strain of those long months slipped from him as he came. Here was his picture ready again to hang in his secret temple, cause enough to rejoice!

He held out his hand and smiled at her, and she put hers in his.

"Eyes of my soul," he said softly; "am I to see?"

Not even Anthony could detect any falseness in his habitual attitude that night. He was at his best, witty, and amusing with the old buoyancy that defeated the

least sign of awkwardness on their part. No one but Andrea could have done it, thought his cousin, obliterate, for all practical purposes his own black record with them, and make them conscious of a miss which had been in their lives and was now filled! It was merely the magic of his own complete content with the present, which he utterly declined to spoil with foolish qualms about that past. He played on Honor as he had always played on her, and, as Anthony knew, would always do. It caused Anthony no uneasiness. He knew his own limitations—and Andrea's now. Andrea could discover for him unexpected depths and new beauties in the mind of the women he loved and who loved him. And now and again he would turn to him with sparkling eyes that seemed desirous of sharing with him the pleasure of discovery. But when Andrea ceased talking, Honor's glance would wander toward Anthony with a pleading confidence. She knew now to a certainty the exact extent of the influence of these two men over her. What ever Andrea might read in her eyes he would never again find confidence written there.

He stayed with them a week, and it was not till the last day that he made any allusion at all to his misdeeds and their consequence.

There had been a letter from Lawrence in the morning and Honor had gone into the garden to re-read it. Andrea joined her and sat beside her. He looked fixedly at the letter as she slowly refolded it.

"I suppose I must not ask to see it," he said abruptly
"What are the chances, Honor, of his ever—?"

"Forgiving you?" she finished for him quietly.

"No—not so much—being willing to see me?"

"Does it really matter to you, Andrea?"

"Yes," he admitted reluctantly.

She leant her chin on her hand in the familiar attitude. It gave him a little thrill of pleasure to follow the well-known lines.

"I can't tell you. Some day it will be all right."

She knew there was something she ought to tell him, and she wondered how he would take it.

"Lawrence has changed his name, Andrea."

He started quite perceptibly.

"He's not Bradon now, he's Manshal. Anthony did not wish it at first, but when Lawrence really wants to do a thing he just does it, and he wanted to do that."

There was a curious silence. Andrea stared at the ground between his knees, and his face looked suddenly aged again.

It was an amazement to her that he could be hurt like this over her news. She had expected him to be angry, perhaps to remonstrate. She had yet to discover, as Anthony had done, that though Andrea might not have much feeling for any one but himself, yet when such feeling as he had was roused, he showed it just as frankly as he showed his general indifference.

"It was his mother's name," he said at last in a low voice, and then he added with extreme deliberation:

"I'd undo that if I could, Honor."

Long afterwards in thinking over it, she wondered if he only referred to his sin against Lawrence, or if there was not a reference to an older and deeper wrong he had done his son.

"And now, Honor," he broke out suddenly, sitting upright and facing her straightly; "how do we stand towards one another? How much have you forgiven me? How much are you going to give me? Are you sorry yet we are friends again, or glad? Am I to come when I will and talk to you, to tell you of all I am doing and mean to do, to draw you sometimes, just

to keep my line pure—to make you talk as you did last night—that's how I learn things, you know."

His voice was serious enough but his eyes smiled at her in the old witching way. She leant back in the seat and tried not to see him.

"You need not fear I shall come between you and Anthony again," he continued, with his limitless audacity; "your best guarantee of that is that it would destroy my own purpose. I daresay you think it's all fantastic nonsense on my part, about not painting without your help. It's fantastic enough and I don't pretend to understand it, but it's not nonsense! it's true. I've tried, you see, and some day I'll show you what it meant—when I am quite sure it will not set you against me again—It was ghastly, Honor."

He stopped suddenly and a sombre misery crept up over his face that made her give a gasp of incredulous surprise. Could he really mind things like that? She was learning fast.

He did not notice, he went on in the same bitter tone.

"When I think, Honor, that I've let the things I did then, be *sold*—go out to the world with any name to them, I am sick with shame—and of all the beastly feelings in the world, that's the worst, and the one I've least room for! The critics praised them—Heaven forgive them!"

He kicked at a stone.

"I've not behaved decently to you, I know, Honor, but you can comfort yourself with the thought that the remembering I've painted those things, and for a minute thought them good, is about as bad a punishment as you could wish me."

He put his hands over his face.

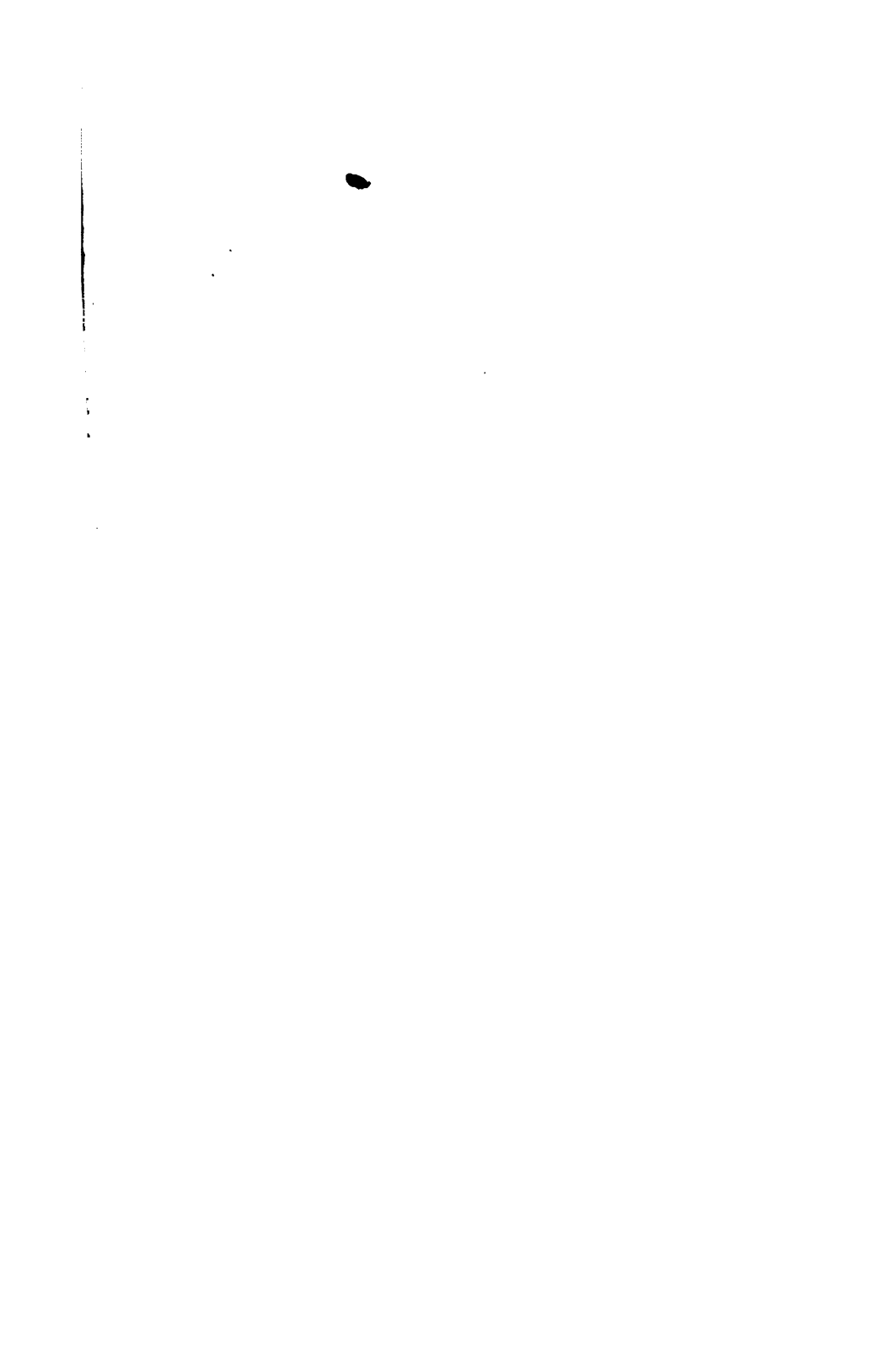
It was a sincere genuine emotion. He meant every word he said. He regretted his behaviour towards his

son, he was quite contrite for the hurt he had dealt Honor and his long-suffering cousin, but he was sick with shame that he had given something to the world that was less than the best within his powers.

Honor leant forward and put her hand gently on his sleeve.

"My dear, perhaps you can buy them back again," she said compassionately.

THE END.



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